

BACK2FRONT

issue 005

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D.O.A.

**NORMAN
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CITIZEN FISH

the
Lobotomies

The Rise and Fall of Russian Anarchism, Unionising the Sex Industry,
Edd (Last Hours), 30 Years of 2-Tone, Columns, Reviews and more inside!

back2front #5

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Welcome to back2front #5 and just in time to joyously watch the smirk fall from Bliar's face as news reached the former Lord of Lies that he won't be president of Europe after all. Of course the neo-Labour architect who finally delivered socialism to the lapping dogs of the right has been down Middle East way enjoying the Crusades, organising a £4 billion deal with British Gas and Israel to pipe gas from Gazan territorial waters into the tanks of the faith and globalisation machine. It's all part of Tony's legacy to make peace in the Middle East by selling off Palestinian resources to their enemy. Bound to work!

Meanwhile back in the UK, which has the most CCTV cameras in the world keeping us all safer than ever, plans are afoot for an artificial intelligence system able to detect criminal behaviour from all that video footage rather than having some poor sod watch every last minute of it. If that's not enough to tickle your inner big brother get yourself over to Stratford-On-Avon where they are unveiling a new online video 'game' in which you get to watch hours of local CCTV and those who spot the most misdemeanors stand to win £1000! Can't you see it now as the blue rinses flock to their keyboards to post their earnest observations - riot cop assaults and kills passer-by for no reason; cops take backhanders from pimps and drug-dealers behind local cafe; politician picks up prostitute beside church; capitalist corner shop rips off public again - the streets would be clean in no time.

Over in the land of the free when they're not out cutting daisy they're throwing trillions of big ones at their beloved banks as unemployment soars above 10%, the highest since Reagan was still duping the nation back in '83. But fear not as we all know there's nothing like a good fiscal stimulating package to cheer you up as you lose your job and are thrown out onto the streets, dispossessed but happy in the knowledge that the economy is in good hands, the banks are offering competitive rates again while you and your family face starvation.

Back in the 40 shades of green having already said feck-off to EU dictatorship under the Lisbon Treaty just last year the Irish were encouraged once again to give the right answer, or else, and unfortunately they said yes. Then again turnout was only 59% and with 67% of that turnout actually voting for the treaty that really means only 35% of the Irish population voted for it all told - isn't democracy wonderful - no wonder they keep exporting it to other countries by the B-52-load!

Across the pond in México there has been a recent spate of 'anarcho-bombings' as the Mexican media has so accurately described the activities of a group who have blown up the usual symbols of capitalism with homemade devices made from butane gas cylinders this last few months. I'm sure the *Peoples' Front of Judea* were turning in their graves as the *Subversive Alliance for the Liberation of the Earth, Animals and Humans* (ASLTAH) issued this rather cheerful communiqué suggesting " *your filthy techno-industrial system provokes our rage and hatred and we say to you now that we will not stop until we see your ashes.*"

Perhaps they'd spare a thought for über-creep Peter Mandelson as he tries to bury postal workers in his latest Machiavellian scheme to privatize our mail. Of course Mandy, when he's not talking profits and losses and tipping champagne glasses with those Bilderberg cronies or indeed with Russian oligarchs in private yachts off Corfu, is now hell bent on stopping internet piracy as well as shoring up jobs for the corporate boys. Perhaps a dash of that something extra in the green custard next time he visits Heathrow Airport might bring about the change of face we all desire.

Spare a thought for poor old Gordon Brown though, now more popular than a BNP supporter at an Antifa rally as he struggles with his ongoing cannabis problem. He's had the reefer madness since being told by a leading scientist, hired by government to investigate the weed, that it's moreorless harmless and that you'd probably do more damage going horse riding - but our Gordy knows better and isn't it reassuring to know that the government only makes our decisions for us having consulted with experts in the field? The unelected PM rebuked the professor informing him the wacky-baccy was '*lethal*' and '*more lethal than before*'. The word '*lethal*' means causing death of course and as cannabis has never done this in its history... next he'll be telling us he's going to send more troops to Afghanistan because it's safe as houses over there!

Our man in the White House is however planning to send 40,000 troops over there for a Bushian 'surge' (and it worked so well last time last time too) in the great battle against disgruntled opium farmers. And with eyes still firmly on Iran, Syria and North Korea it looks like we can expect more of the same. Anyway do bear in mind that lampooning politicians does not offer the same *joie de vivre* as hanging the last one of the bastards from the factory gates with the bloody intestines of the last priest! Apparently. So I'm led to believe.

Thanks as always to everyone who contributed to this issue especially Sean Fitzpatrick who stepped in at the last minute to do the cover artwork, Dick from Citizen Fish, Joey from DOA, Norman, The Lobotomies, Szarapow, Trev Hagl, Foot printers, Ruth Less, Edd (Last Hours), Ana Lopez and Red & Black Revolution. This issue is dedicated to Caroline who helped out on numerous occasions with the zine - I wish her all the best for the future!

If you'd like to take copies to sell then please get in touch at the address above. Outta here...

Added Anarchy?

That's right folks you didn't get a crap CD that you'll never play and that won't take up space on your shelf and that you'll never sell on eBay. Instead we have added some local anarchist publications for your viewing pleasure. If you didn't get any then try adding a little of your own! It tastes great and it's fun for all the family!

We anarchists do not want to emancipate the People. We want the people to emancipate Themselves. (Errico Malatesta)

30 Years **2** On TONE

It's hard to believe that it's 30 years since the birth of the 2-Tone phenomenon in the UK. Between 1978-79 a group of musicians from the West Midlands called the **Coventry Automatics** began creating a form of music which fused 60's Jamaican ska music with the social commentary of punk. Eventually, having changed their name to **The Specials**, band member and main songwriter Jerry Dammers founded the 2-Tone label and began releasing an array of similar style bands in the increasingly familiar chequered sleeves. 2-Tone was born.

Although it was **The Clash** who first blended reggae with punk, the 2-Tone bands created a unique genre of music which had both mainstream appeal and radical multiculturalism at its heart. 2-Tone arrived in the UK at a time when far right bigotry and Conservative politics were in the ascendancy. Margaret Thatcher came to power earlier that same year and ushered in an era which drove communities apart and set

In 1968 Tory bigot Enoch Powell had delivered his infamous "*Rivers of Blood*" speech which was highly influential on the rise of racist politics in Britain. When in 1976 dreary rock guitarist Eric Clapton revealed his support for Powell it created a backlash which led to the formation of the Rock against Racism movement. RAR staged concerts which usually had a mixed bill of black reggae and white punk bands culminating in a huge concert in Victoria Park in 1978, headlined by **The Clash**.

Ironically the original skinhead movement in the UK, which

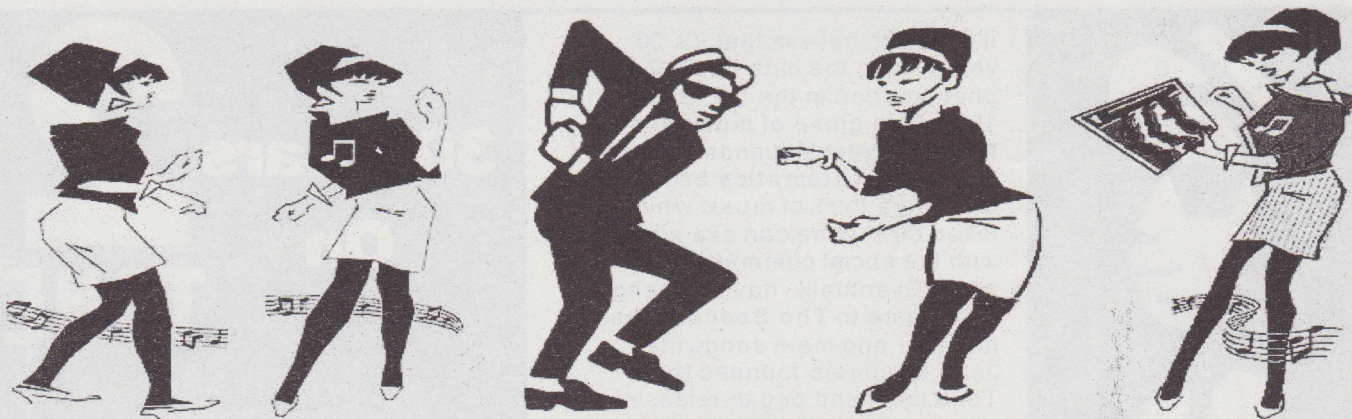
individual against individual in a mass competitive grab for money, property and the last slice of the pie.

With millions unemployed, lack of opportunity and urban decay commonplace, the outlook for young people was bleak. While punk had been driven underground, at least in the eyes of the music press which as always favoured commercialism over content, 2-Tone was a breath of fresh air.

The main bands on the label were of course **The Specials**, **The Selecter**, **Madness** and **The Beat**, though the latter 2 bands soon went in their own directions. What set these bands apart is that although most of them had members of mixed race they were not active in organisations such as Rock against Racism or the Anti-Nazi League. Did they need to be?

developed from the Jamaican rude boy movement and favoured the skinhead look and reggae music, had soon become associated with far right tendencies. There were street clashes, notably the 1977 riots in Lewisham which saw the amalgamation of these new street fashions with street politics. When 2-Tone entered into the foray however it became a melting pot for multiculturalism, but it didn't need the obvious political banner of RAR.

The 2-Tone caricature of *Walt Jabsco* the 2-Tone man which adorned many of the labels record sleeves represented an amalgamation of cultures. It was neither black nor white but borrowed from black history and white culture in equal measure. The first 2-Tone tour of the UK which featured **The Specials**, **Madness** and **The Selecter** began a wave of inclusivity which



made black and white interaction an ordinary everyday reality in the UK! But with it came the goose-stepping skinheads who targeted the all-white band **Madness** especially.

Madness were never especially political compared to the other 2-Tone bands with only a few songs like "Embarrassment" (about mixed marriage) having any real political overtones. They soon left the 2-Tone label and went mainstream. But the 2-Tone sound had spread its influence with acts as diverse as **Adam and the Ants**, **Dexy's Midnight Runners**, **UB40**, **Elvis Costello** and even **The Police** following the style. Other ska bands like **Bad Manners** and **The Beat** emerged too while 2-Tone introduced acts like **The Swinging Cats** and all-girl band **The Bodysnatchers**. By 1980 2-Tone was where it was at.

The multicultural overtones of the new dance movement also made their way to Belfast during an especially intense period with the H-Block Hunger Strikes and in my own scene it created a bridge for the religious divide. We used to swap records and badges in the summer of 1980 oblivious to the sectarianism around us, whereas only months before we were kicking the living shit out of each other, and I have the scars to prove it! In those days however

everyone wore Harrington's, DM boots, loafers with white socks and pork pie hats if only for a little while. What united us was that the lyrics of these bands, particularly **The Specials**, spoke about the day to day reality of life on the streets that we could all easily identify with. Essentially though the 2-Tone era remains an example of how music can affect social and political ideas in a way that significantly and permanently affects society.

I collected all the records back then oblivious to the notion of how record companies and the music business simply move in, buy out, change and market any new phenomenon ultimately removing its potential as a social force. The 2-Tone label was a subsidiary of Chrysalis Records, licensed by Island Records and owned by EMI since 1991. Influence on the label saw it move from the traditional ska-influenced sound to a genre alarmingly referred to as 'lounge/muzak' as it tried to 'move with the times' with new acts like **The Higsons**, and **The Friday Club** taking things in the wrong direction. When **The Specials** split up in 1981, 2-Tone was essentially over, though the label lingered into the 90's.

But before these events transpired British society had been transformed. **The Specials'**

last single "Ghost Town" was ironically at Number 1 and the UK was on fire. There were serious riots in Brixton, Toxteth, Handsworth, Chapeltown, Moss Side, and also in Belfast. The riots were a result of rising racial tension; poor housing, unemployment and a total mistrust of the police, especially over the Sus laws which allowed cops power to stop people for 'reasonable suspicion'. In Belfast Republican prisoners were starving themselves to death over political status while Mrs Thatcher 'refused to bow'. Thatcher's solution to the riots was an increase in police powers, the *Public Order Manual*, and the infamous Youth Training Scheme, a useful tool for doctoring employment figures in future.

In 1981 Enoch Powell, now an Ulster Unionist MP, was talking of 'racial civil war' attempting to stir the race pot as his political career continued to flounder. But although the National Front, under John Tyndall, had been driven off the streets, a far-right government was actually in power.

It's interesting to look back on those events and to recall the soundtrack playing in the background. The 2-Tone subculture became the soundtrack to bricks swirling through the air and petrol bombs crashing into justified targets. But



Scene from Brixton riots 1981

within a few short years the label went into demise.

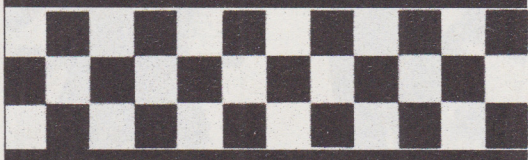
As a form of music the second wave of ska, as 2-Tone is sometimes called, would in fact inspire the so-called 3rd Wave. Robert Hingley formed **The Toasters** in 1981 and exported the sound to the USA where it became very popular in the late 1980's inspiring bands like **Operation Ivy** and later **Rancid** creating a general ska revival.

Back in the UK most of the 2-Tone bands had split up but over the years there were various reformations and incarnations. Pauline Black kept **The Selecter** going while **Bad Manners** have continued to tour to this day. **Special Beat** comprised of members of both those bands toured for a while though **The Beat** and **Madness** have reformed in the last few years. **The Specials** first reformation in the early 90's featured only half the band and was missing key members.

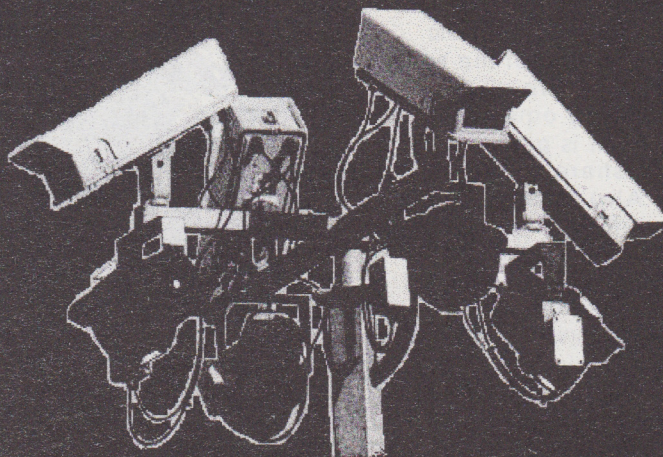
In 2008 however, Terry Hall announced that the original **Specials** were reforming for a 30th anniversary tour in 2009 and possibly some new recordings. Unfortunately key writer and founder Jerry Dammers would not be on board. I was curious but when I saw the ticket prices for the tour touching £40 I began to wonder if they were simply looking to fill the pension pot. It remains to be seen what they will do with it.

And darting back again to the mid-80's in the UK we also saw new bands like **Culture Shock** and **RDF** using ska and reggae but informed more by anarcho-punk to make political ideas and social commentary danceable once again.

Yet 30 years on we see the same social conditions that led to major street-rioting back when 2-Tone was at its height. The right-wing are on the rise, social inequality prevails and the rich are getting richer. Although music can provide a soundtrack and a bridge to political and social ideas it is people who organise and get things done at the end of the day.



the Lobotomies



NANNY State ELECTRICS

The Lobotomies are a 4 piece band from Belfast who've been making themselves known to the authorities for a few years now. Besides the band some of the members are also involved in local class struggle organisation and drummer Jim also makes burritos. Join us now as we investigate sordid tales of rock 'n' roll excess, wild stories from the road and how Jim manages to keep it up in the weird and wacky World of the Lobotomies....



B2F: Introduce yourselves, a brief bio...

Jim: The Lobotomies have been going since late 2005, when Kev and I formed the band while living together (in sin). Dan joined on bass in April '06, and Paul joined on bass summer '07. So by my counting we now have 3 bassists... Anyway, in that time we've done over 200 gigs around the UK, Ireland, and Western Europe, released 1 demo, 1 split album and 1 EP. We play punk with hardcore, thrash and German pop influences and our lyrics range from worship of the demon drink to scathing socio-political commentary, and back again.

B2F: You have a new album coming out shortly, how did it all come together and what can we mere punters expect? I notice that all 4 members of the band take turn at singing duties. Does each member sing the songs they write or how do you work it out?

Jim: The album is a culmination of all the songs we've written in the last 2 years or so. Sound wise, we've gotten a bit heavier and faster – all good – and the recording quality is another improvement. Big cheers to Frankie McClay at Einstein for that. Its 17 tracks, 33 minutes and 33 seconds and it'll skin ye a

fiver and your last shred of dignity.

The song writing process basically consists of each member bringing fairly fully-formed songs to the group – obviously these are pretty open to suggestions for improvement, but the basic structure and style of the song tend to remain. We all contribute pretty equally in that respect, which is probably why we all do a share of the 'singing'. Also, utilising our collective lung capacity takes a bit of strain off our fairly mistreated throats. I think all of us like to use the multi-vocal approach when writing a song – in gang vocals, line-and-response, and even the odd Westlifesque arpeggio harmony.

Dan: Generally we sing what we bring to the table, so to speak, but like Jim says occasionally we'd break it up with the whole line-and-response thing. It gives it the odd bit of variety and gives us time to breathe live.

Paul: I hate singing, but the others jab me in the ribs with sharp sticks when I stand near microphones, so it's their fault your ears hurt. When I first joined the band my wretched vocal chords wouldn't last a whole song, so I split 'The Defeated' between Jim and Kev, then quartered the next one I wrote, giving my guttural 'rocks in a tumble drier' yelp more prominence. For some reason we don't play any of my newest ones ... Kev- They just thrash so hard its hurts to play em!

B2F: Is punk just a subculture, another musical genre exploited by the market because revolution sells? What do you think of punk in Belfast nowadays? How is it different and what does it have to offer young people? Do you think punk can inspire and galvanise people to actions beyond buying the new Green Day album and standing outside City Hall?

Dan: Quite a few questions there. I don't think punk's really just another part of the mainstream... it can probably be seen as the opposite of that, as a way to get away from the mainstream. That's why I find punk to have a stronger sense



of community than other genres might have. For instance, while on tour, you can go to a town you've never been to before and end up leaving the next day with some really good friends, all because you have punk in common. As for the City Hall crowd, if you're listening to pop punk there's always the possibility to branch out into other genres of punk. Which is more than can be said for someone listening to the latest Euphoria dance CD, or some shit.

Kev: The punk scene in Belfast these days, whilst still remaining relatively strong in numbers still has its problems. The main thing that gets on my tits is how apolitical it is at the minute. So many of the younger ones coming through have little or no interest in politics or even building an alternative community. To a lot of people in Belfast its less of a movement and more of a social club. Turnouts at gigs have also been suffering because many would rather spend their money getting a carryout or buying some shit

drug. I'm not saying that people shouldn't be having fun and the social element is great at times but its important to remember that punk scenes can be great hot beds of political activism and in Belfast at the minute that just isn't the case. On the positive side I think this is changing, there's more and more people within the scene being politicized and getting active and when we get the new social centre up and running, I'm sure it will have a big part to play in encouraging people to get involved in activism. We also have a great range of bands who are masters at their craft from street punk to ska/punk, hardcore (not as much as I would like ha-ha!), crust and progressive punk.

B2F: You describe yourselves as anarchists but it's quite a loaded term and means a lot of different things to different people. For example some people see anarcho-punk as a lifestyle choice in which decisions not to eat meat or boycott certain products, for example, has zero bearing on



class struggle which must be central to anarchism, according to some. What does anarchism mean to you?

Jim : Several writers have suggested that there are as many anarchisms as there are anarchists. That's probably true within the band as well. While we agree on an overwhelming range of issues and our basic understanding of society, we frequently engage in

That's not to say that anarcho-punk is going to change the world on its own, but it *is* part of wider struggle – a wider struggle that is hugely interconnected. I don't think it's useful to separate community and industrial struggle.

Paul : This might surprise the rest of the band, but I haven't actually described myself as 'an anarchist' for a long time now, partly because of these

the same 'tribe' as us, who read the wrong books, who aren't vegan, who sometimes don't exclusively wear black ... I often get annoyed about the fact that anarchists actually enjoy their marginal-rebel straitjackets, and would shit bricks and run away (i.e. smoke dope and hide in a cupboard) if these theories became remotely achievable in a reality outside their superior minds. But thanks for asking, and probably reigniting those hair-splitting (tearing out?) debates.

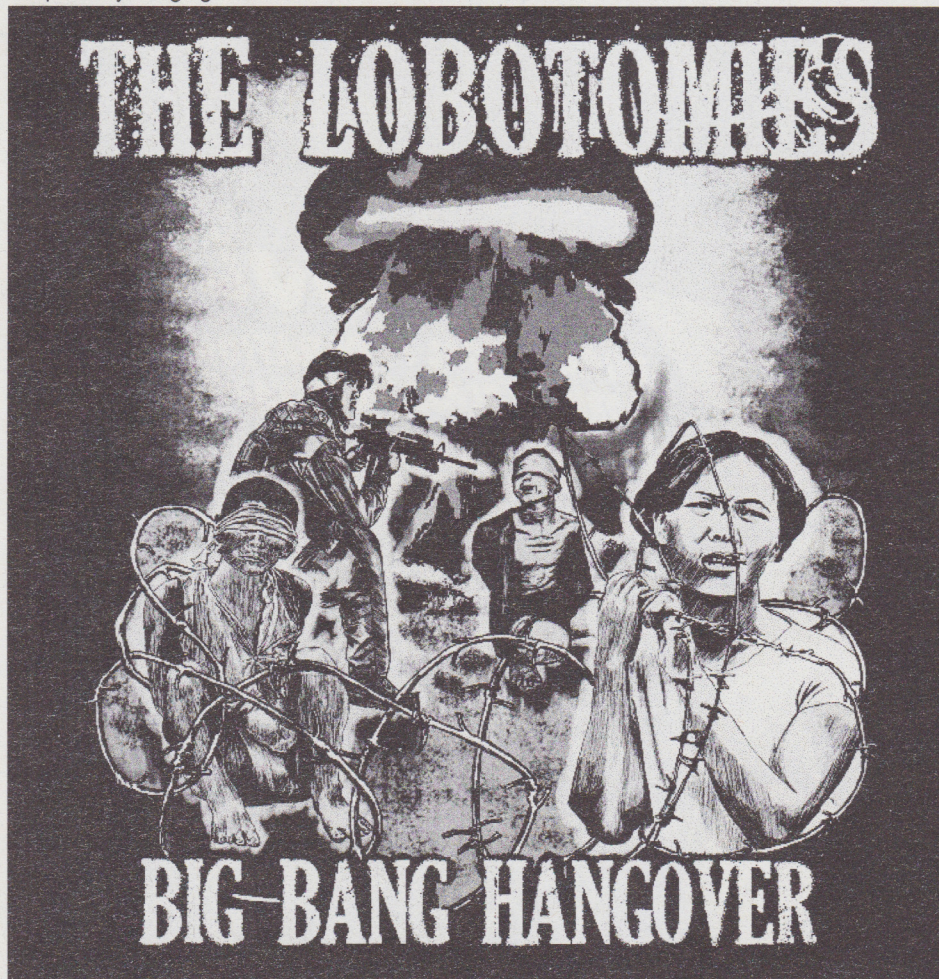
B2F: And of course there's nothing wrong with developing conscious decisions over how you live your life so aren't some anarchists elitist too when they tell you it's irrelevant?

Paul : See above: that's part of the water-treading fun, deciding what's relevant. Incidentally, Kev or Dan have never once tried to persuade me about their love for farmyard animals. Conscious decisions are difficult when you drink as much as us ..

B2F: Does Jim allow you to touch his hair?

Kev : Hah! No he's worse than Ace Ventura. He carries around hairspray and a dryer at all times. His favourite thing in the world is when drunk people approach him and quiz him on how he "keeps it up" or how he sleeps. As I say Jim LOVES answering these questions so if more people could approach him for Mohawk quizzes that would be great.

B2F: Recently there were more fascist attacks in Belfast and the cowardly attacks on the Roma off Lisburn Road made national headlines. The cops were initially nowhere to be seen. The chief constable's report which had come out just before these events suggested that racist attacks were down because of the brave efforts of his officers. Of course we know it's because they don't show up and the extent of fascist activity is played down. Northern Ireland is the race-hate capital of the world. Do you think this is a fair assumption? What is happening in respect of the anti-fascist movement in Belfast?



heated debates over the finer details, probably to the point of splitting hairs.

I think the suggestion that one form of anarchism or another has to be 'central' smacks of elitism. Definitely, class struggle anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism have their place, particularly in worker and industrial struggles, but to demarcate that as the prime site of struggle just ends up as reification and raises problems of vanguard-ism – which of course is contrary to all forms of anarchism. The accusation of anarcho-punk as lifestylism also overlooks the music industry aspect. By refusing major record labels and operating as far outside capitalism as possible, you can actively struggle against capitalism.

ghetto/fabulist reasons Jim mentions. Don't worry, big-A anarchism remains for me the most valid analysis of state authority and its stranglehold on just existence; and its certainly the best framework for hearty destructive thoughts about society as is. But a large part of the reason the bastards always win, of course, is the movement's ironic refusal to be more cohesive, and the resulting diminishing hierarchy of elitist truth that sets us all adrift: avowedly right wing=detestable; people in the army, police, civil service, financial institutions etc=sell outs, wankers or worse; commies, liberals, left parliamentarians, humanist organisations who negotiate with government=deluded soft heads; anarchists who aren't of exactly

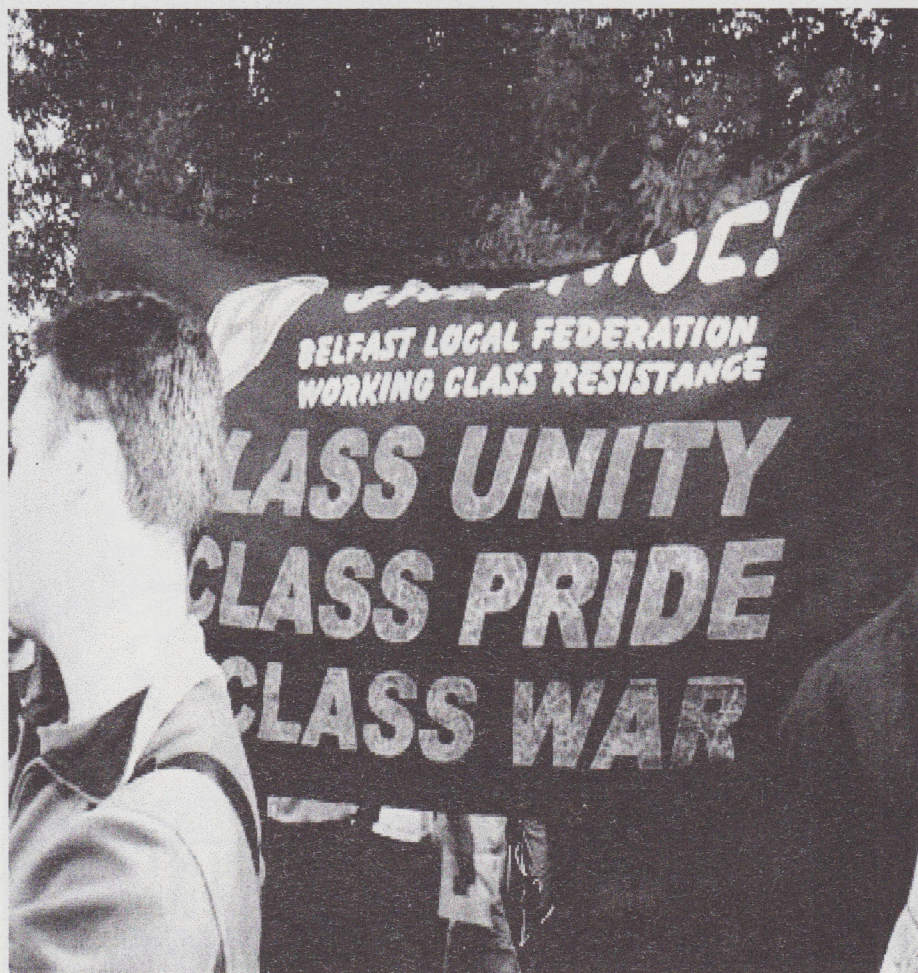
Kev: I think the media branding us as the hate capitol of the world is totally unfair. I don't think that statement has any real truth and I find it hard to believe that when comparing numbers of reported racially motivated crimes that we have the worst record in Europe or even in the world! It's just another one of these statements the media use to make headlines, I mean when are the corporate owned media ever concerned with the real fucking truth? The anti-authoritarian and non-hierarchical anti-fascist movement is currently organising and setting up a branch of Antifa in Belfast. Antifa are dedicated to grassroots anti-fascism, confronting fascism ideologically and physically. This is a new group forming but members have been involved in various a-f campaigns in the past. Many of those involved in Antifa were involved with the Roma families and stood in solidarity with them throughout the night outside their houses when the police failed to protect them from racist thugs. Of course the media labelled the people concerned as pumped up vigilante's, but in reality the families wanted them there and had no faith whatsoever in the police. For more info on Antifa Belfast contact: antifabelfast@googlemail.com.

B2F: You've played with loads of bands that have come over to Belfast, as well as on tour. What's been your favourite? What's been a nightmare? (Well you have to have a bit of band trivia after all those heavy questions...)

Jim: Those were heavy questions indeed! The first UK tour we did was probably the toughest. Basically we'd had to postpone it twice because of driver problems, and the third time it was gonna be the same shit so we just decided, fuck it, let's do the damn tour on national express and mega-bus. We missed several gigs because of delayed and broken down buses, got very good at scabbing free food from sandwich stalls in bus stations, had our arms stretched 3 inches from carrying our gear around with us all the time – but were rewarded each night

with a sweet from our old bassist Bob if we'd been well behaved. On one bus from London to Glasgow (hell-ride) the driver had forgotten to close the boot, and we looked out the window to see everyone's stuff being strewn across central London as he manoeuvred a round-a-bout. Also, while killing time at Piccadilly Circus, a tourist asked for a photo of us. We were looking particularly fetching at the time, I assure you. She

when Dan and Kev enthusiastically declared, 'Jim, this is a great idea, let's brand 'L' on our arms for Lobotomies!' I instantly and equally enthusiastically agreed that, yes, this was indeed a fantastic idea. The branding process involved heating up the handle of a desert spoon with a lighter, 'til it was red hot, then pressing the hot metal into your arm – in the appropriate shape of course. Nice. It wasn't 'til



was promptly joined by several others, then several dozen others and pretty soon we had a paparazzi style crowd stealing our souls with their flashing picture boxes. Weird. At least they got a nice photo of some authentic London punx...

However, our most painful, and probably stupidest moment was when we were staying in a squat in Bristol on a later tour, summer '06 maybe. We'd been enjoying vast quantities of scrumpy cider and amphetamines, as you do, and were having a raucous old time – spelling out each other's names in lines on mirrors and all that rock n roll jazz. Anyway, I came back into the front room from getting more cider

later that week that I noticed my pussing, seeping, infected brand was in fact backwards! My hand even swole up from some veins being cauterised. Just to cap things off, when we met our Bristolian branding assailants at Blackpool later on that tour, they greeted Dan with a Chinese burn right on his brand. So fucking sore.

Kev: Let it be said I no longer take said drug and this was the stupidest thing I have ever done. Fuck sake. I think my favourite gigs have been at the Kopi in Berlin and our gigs with **Strike Anywhere** and **Propagandhi**. In my opinion the best bands we have ever played with are **Propagandhi**, **Strike Anywhere**, **Only Fumes**

and Corpses, Subhumans, Droppin' Bombs and Cut the Reins.

B2F: Some of you are involved in local anarchist organisation Organise! Can you tell us a bit about the group, a rough history and how and why you got involved?

Kev: Organise! are a class struggle anarchist group based in Belfast that formed in 2004 when other groups at the time merged to create a more effective class struggle anarchist organisation. Organise! have been involved in a wide range of workers struggles as well as anti-fascist, anti-racist, anti-war, anti-capitalist and pro-choice campaigns. We also produce a quarterly tabloid named "The Leveller". We've all been involved with members of the group in different class struggle, anti-war and anti-fascists campaigns but I decided to become a member about a year ago (i think) and we encourage anyone interested in activism to come along to a meeting and get involved! Contact: organiseireland@yahoo.ie

B2F: How did your first recording, the EP, go down? Did you get any rave reviews in the metal press?

Dan: If you mean the *Drink, Pass Out, Repeat* EP, it seemed to get mixed reviews. Someone called us 'sub par gutter punk' in one. I don't think they liked our spiky hair. But luckily, most reviews were more favourable than that. I'm not sure what the metal crew think of it, but I think they've a chance of liking the album, it's a bit heavier and thrashier.

B2F: What plans do you have for the band? Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Dan : To get the album out, get on the road and play anywhere that'll have us.

Kev : All our gigs and other info can be found at www.myspace.com/thelobotomies. For booking or just to hurl abuse contact: thelobotomies@gmail.com. Thanks for giving us the opportunity to bore people with our written diarrhoea.

ACTIVE MINDS

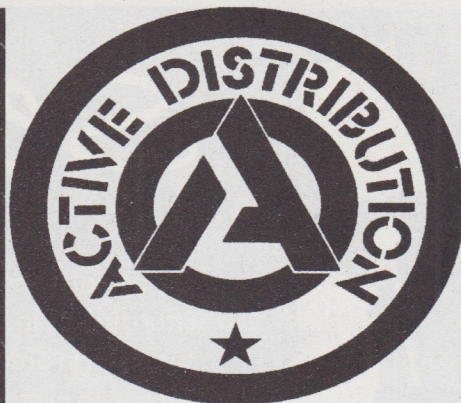


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Sexploitation

Pornography and prostitution are controversial subjects because of their exploitative nature but as in any trade, workers rally towards unionisation creating industry standards in order to protect themselves from abuse, improve health and safety conditions and create protocols to tackle exploitation. Whatever your moral position on these subjects it is important to recognise that currently proposed government legislation will not target exploitative practices but will further criminalise the sex industry and drive it underground where exploitation and violence remain unchecked. Until recently the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) was the only union for sex workers (#690). In this thought-provoking interview from *Red and Black Revolution* Ana Lopez from the International Union of Sex Workers founded in 2000 discusses the need for an international union and the need for greater understanding of the industry and the sex workers themselves.

RBR: Can you please introduce yourself and the union you are part of and helped start.

Ana: My name is Ana Lopez from the International Union of Sex Workers (IUSW). I was one of the founders of IUSW. I was working as a sex worker in London when I finished my masters and wanted to start a PhD. Since I was working in this area, I decided that I would do research for my PhD within the sex industry. I don't believe in science for science sake, I believe that any kind of research should be engaged and useful for the people you have studied. I started doing what we call strategic research, where you ask the people you want to study what they think is an interesting topic or area that needs to be studied and what kind of information they need to gather to respond to those needs.

I did my pilot interview with people from different sectors of the sex industry: from prostitution, street workers, pornography models and actors. And I asked them these kinds of questions. What I found out from this initial group of people was that one of the main complaints was that they felt very isolated and they didn't have a collective voice. They were telling me they

needed a collective voice in order to eliminate the exploitation that they faced. This group of people didn't feel that their work was inherently bad or immoral in any sense, but they felt that they were forced to work in exploitative conditions because of the legislation and because of the stigma attached to their work. They also wanted to respond to the way the media portrayed them. The general public only has the media to understand what sex work is all about and they show a very black and white picture that doesn't do justice to the realities and multiple experiences within sex work.

When I heard all of this I interpreted it from my activist background that they weren't giving me a topic of research but a call for action. And I thought that I had the responsibility to have this action happen with their help. So I called my pilot interviewees for a meeting in my flat over tea and cookies and we talked about this kind of research. I asked them if they were really serious about this and if they would like to create this type of platform and collective in which we can demand our rights.

When it was clear that this was what people wanted, we then

defined our mission statement and what we were there for. We decided that we were there to fight for rights for all types of sex workers, especially labour rights. We felt that what was wrong with the way people saw sex workers till then was that it was discussed within the realm of feminism, gender and morality. What we were saying was that it was work, and the reason all of us are in this industry is that we need to pay our bills at the end of each month. So if we treat it as any other work, as a labour issue, then we can find solutions. And solutions are to be found in eliminating the exploitative conditions and not eliminating the industry altogether. That what you do in other exploitative industries also applies here. Women and transgender people get exploited in many other industries unfortunately. But the response of the feminist and trade union movement in relation to those other industries is to eliminate the exploitation and not the industry itself. We wanted to get in line with all other workers. Basically that's how it got started.

RBR: How have you gone about getting members in to the union, outside of your personal network?

Ana: At the beginning we started by publishing a magazine, we called it RESPECT! (Rights and Equality for Sex Professionals and Employees in Connected Trades). This magazine has articles written about sex work and by sex workers. We were able to go to different places where sex workers operate, we had something to offer and something to talk about. We also set up a web site and a discussion list. These two things were instrumental in making this group international. When we started we called ourselves international, but we started as a small group based in London so we were not international. Through the web site people have joined from all over the world, we have more than 2000 members on the discussion list.

RBR: Would you have members from all different aspects of sex work?

Ana: The two most dominant groups are people who work in prostitution (I mean all types of prostitution; people who work on the streets, people who work indoors, people who work in S&M, escorts) and people who work in dance - strip tease, pole dancing etc. Those are the biggest groups, but we also have models, actresses and phone sex operators.

RBR: In terms of the work that is legal at the moment, what are the rights you are fighting for?

Ana: The right to have a proper contract, having

a proper code of conduct in the place you work so it is clear what you are allowed and not allowed to do, for the managers and clients to know what they are allowed and not allowed to do. It is important that these are written down and made very clear, and if someone breaks those rules there must be mechanisms to address that and penalise the one who broke the rules. So it's very important to have grievance procedures like most other work places. Now there are a couple of clubs that are unionised and you can find these things.

Also Health and Safety rights, something that is basic in most other work places that is ignored in the sex industry. People are using their bodies in their work, they are dancing and wearing high heels. For instance, you can't expect dancers who are wearing high heels to be going up and down stairs, it is not safe at all. You cannot expect them to dance doing floor work if the floor is not clean. And you can't use abrasive cleaning products to clean poles because people are going to use those poles to lean against.

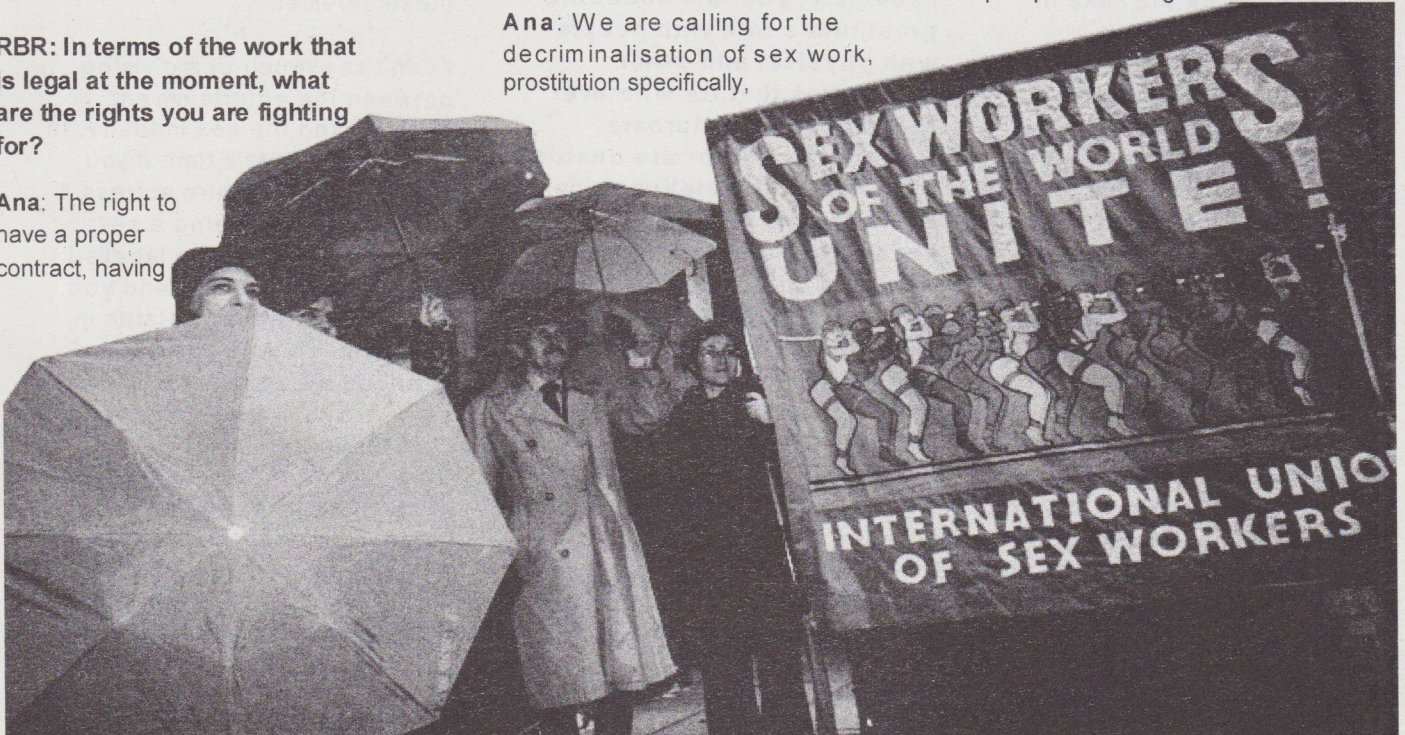
RBR: How about the illegal aspects of sex work, what is the union trying to fight for there?

Ana: We are calling for the decriminalisation of sex work, prostitution specifically,

since all the establishments in that area are illegal. Prostitution itself is legal but everything around it is illegal. There is hardly any way you can do this as a profession and without breaking the law somehow. That is what makes it such a dangerous and underground activity. We are using the political clout of the union to put pressure on governments to decriminalise prostitution.

RBR: Would the goal be to eliminate street prostitution and have safe legal indoor spaces?

Ana: No, that is something that the general public thinks would be a good idea, and unfortunately politicians as well, but that wouldn't be a fair type of situation. That kind of idea comes from people thinking that no one would work on the streets if they had the choice. That's not true, many people would prefer to work on the streets because there is freedom attached to that; you are independent, you don't have a boss, you decide what type of hours you want to work. For many people that is very important. What we would call for is legal establishments so that people can work in those establishments legally. In that situation you would have less people working on the streets.



And for those who choose to work on the streets, the idea is that they can work in safety, in safety zones. It might not be the ideal but there are examples where it is working really well in the Netherlands and in Edinburgh, so that is the model we have been pointing to. These areas are appointed by the local authorities as areas that prostitution takes place in and police will be there to protect the sex workers rather than arrest them. These areas would be well lit so there are less chances of being attacked by potentially dangerous or violent clients.

RBR: On your web site you say that the percentage of women who experience trafficking is quite low, yet in the media it would seem that this is a huge problem, can you speak about that?

Ana: This is an industry where lots and lots of people want to migrate. Sex workers are often the most entrepreneurial people within their company. In this industry there is always a need for new faces, so to be a successful sex worker you have to move from one place to another. If you want to earn money you are going to move to another country where someone told you where you can make more money. People often just want to move for the sake of moving.

So there is a lot of migration, very often people do not have the opportunity to migrate in a legal way so they will need a third party helping them in this process of migration. Because it is an illegal industry, an illegal process of migration, this leaves many opportunities for these third parties to exploit sex workers. In migration it's a process you can compare to a lottery; some people are very lucky and they make a lot of money in the country they migrated to. Some people have very bad stories to tell. There is a continuum of situations. In one extreme you have people who have been successful and in the other extreme you have people



who have experienced exploitative situations, such as slavery. We cannot let this happen, even if it's one person it's not acceptable. There is a sense that the media makes this into hype, a moral fear. You would have the impression that all migration is trafficking and it's not. Those situations with exploitation and where people have no freedom of movement are in a tiny minority if you compare it to the phenomenon that is migration. To look at this you have to look at migration first.

RBR: On the web site, in debunking myths about prostitution and showing the positive role prostitutes have in society, you talk about the prostitute's role with people with physical and other disabilities that for whatever reason can't masturbate themselves and/or are unable to have sexual relationships with other people. It would seem that that aspect of a sex worker's clientele would be quite small and it would be more the rich white businessmen who are using the service and maintaining the power and hierarchical dynamics in the rest of the society. Can you speak on this?

Ana: Possibly they are not such a small minority as you imagine. I know many sex workers that make most of their money with the city workers and

businessmen so they can have time to dedicate to clients who have disabilities so they don't need to charge as much. These are areas that are growing.

There is a demand for whatever reason for sexual services. I believe the market is growing because until recently the only people who had economic power to use sexual services were businessmen, male, with high economic status. I think things are changing and more and more women have economic power to access sexual services. There is still a lot of stigma attached to that. I think when women are accessing sex workers it's through the internet so they are not seen as using these services.

I don't see much of a division between the entertainment industry and the sex industry. In my grandmother's time if you chose to be a theatre actress it was as good as being a sex worker. You would be labelled as a whore and a slut and you wouldn't have a high status in society at all. And this has changed tremendously, now singers and actresses have very high status.

RBR: It seems like prostitution is not like every other type of work. It is many women's experience to be treated like they are prostitutes, that they get treated as an object to be used and that they are expected to use their body to

repay a favour that a male has done for them. And women get treated like prostitutes every day without having made the choice to go into that profession.

Ana: Thank you for asking this question, it is one that no has asked me in a long time and it is the reason for my activism. No woman is free till all sex workers are free. It is exactly that stigma, that we can call the whore stigma, that is not limited to sex workers. We sex workers feel that every woman on the planet at a certain point feels that stigma, since it is attached to all women. So that's why I think that all women should join in solidarity to fight for our rights. Because at any point you can be called a whore, if there is no reason for that to be a stigma then we all can be free. That will stop being an insult when sex workers are treated with dignity like any other worker and when no sex worker is in this industry against their will. And that is the role of the union and sex worker self organisation, to make sure that no one is in this industry against their will and those that are in the industry can work with full labour rights with dignity and respect. I think sex workers organising should be inspiring for other workers. Because we work with our bodies it is obvious that no one should control our bodies, and that we should be able to do whatever we want with our own bodies.

And if we manage to organise and do our work on our own terms, and have control of our

industry in the least organised and the most marginalised of workers, then any worker can do that, and I hope this inspires other workers to see that no one should have control over their body and their work. They should control their own industries. When people realise that, then we can get rid of capitalism and have global revolution.

RBR: You mentioned in that the people that were part of your pilot interview all made an informed decision to work in the sex industry, do you think this represents the wider community?

Ana: They were a network of friends many of whom were involved in other forms of activism as well, so I would not generalise this across all those in the industry. Yet I can say after five years of activism and working in the industry and so on that that it is a great majority. It is only a small minority that doesn't make an informed decision to enter this industry.

RBR: From many women I know, they have said they consider going to into sex work at some level, let it be phone work and so on due to feeling extreme poverty. And other women have said that in the back of their minds they knew it was always an option because they were a woman. I would not consider these situations to be informed decisions, but rather desperation.

Ana: Yet that applies to any other industry. I wouldn't consider working in McDonalds because at this time I'm not desperate. Let's say this year or the year after I'm really desperate for money, maybe I would work at McDonalds or clean toilets, things that I would never imagine myself doing. Things that I think are more undignified and humiliating than working in the sex industry. People have different images of what they want to do, and different ideas of what is humiliating and what is an ok type of work. I think that poverty is not enough to explain sex work because on one hand you have people in poverty who do not work in the sex industry, who choose to do other things, and many people who do work in the sex industry who are not in poverty and have many other possibilities. I know many people in the industry who have degrees who have left other careers to work in the sex industry and so on. What you cannot do is generalise in this industry, you have multiple realities. People come from different situations and social and economic backgrounds.

RBR: You mentioned that part of your struggle is fighting capitalism and I was wondering if in your ideal society capitalism didn't exist and society was self organized, do you think sex work would exist and if so how would it be organised?

Ana: I think that in my ideal utopian society people would not have sex for money, but people would not do teaching for money, they would do everything for love because they wanted to. That is what I'm working for. While we have to live under capitalism, I think it's really unfair to pick on sex workers. We are all selling ourselves, we are all selling our labour under capitalism. So don't pick on sex workers and expect sex workers to do something different from what everyone else is doing.

I think there is a revolutionary



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potential among sex workers because they are the most oppressed and marginalised of workers, and if this group is able to stand up for their rights and take control of the huge industry it would be an inspiration for all. Because it's underground there is lots of corruption, if we can manage to take control, then any worker can do that.

You were asking me a question of sex work being like any type of work and I didn't really address that. I think sex work is a specific type of work, in a sense it is not like any other type of work. There are many other industries that you are using your own body and that doesn't mean you shouldn't have the full range of labour and human rights and that you shouldn't be respected. I'm thinking about an industry that is marginal to the sex industry and that is the fashion industry. A few years ago when Miss World was held in London, we went to the place where the competition was taking place with banners and leaflets inviting the contestants to join the union, because they also are working with their bodies. They are also working in a corrupt industry. But they have rights, not full rights - that's why we are asking them to join the union. They are still very much exploited, they can make lots of money but the ones organising the fashion industry are making much more money. And they experience many of the same problems such as being pushed onto drugs and such things. My point is that they have a different status in society, they are viewed as successful women, young women strive to be like them, and they are all over mainstream magazines. So I ask what is the difference, why can they enjoy respect and a positive view from society and sex workers can't.

When you do sex work you are in danger of getting very emotionally involved, clients are very close to you, your body and so on. There are many professions where this happens. I think if I was a psychiatrist for

instance I would not be able to deal with people's emotional problems and switch off at five o'clock in the evening. Yes you have to learn to deal with all this emotional baggage that comes with it.

The other thing that is interesting was that I had to tell my mother my work. My mother for many years was a child minder, that was commodification of child care, which in our society is viewed as even more sacred than sex - the mother's love is something that is very sacred. Under capitalism even that is made into a commodity. My mother used to organise five of these women doing this work, their work was to take care of other children for the day and at the end of the day they go home. And I told my mother you are the equivalent of a brothel mother, you are organising groups of women to do something that in our ideal society would be done for love and not for money. And it is also something that triggers a basic instinct, of motherly love. So these women would love these children for money for a few hours, and then these children would disappear. The biggest difference between my mother and the women that work for her is that they are legal, they are actually seen as doing something good in society's eyes and they have rights and a sex worker doesn't.

In supporting this kind of initiative of sex workers organizing, you don't necessarily have to agree with my view that sex work is a legitimate type of work, and that it's not inherently exploitative. When we were in the union meeting there were different members from different industries, and I tried to pass a motion calling for decriminalising prostitution. Then people got to speak either for or against the motion. And one of the most interesting comments was from this lay member of the GNB who worked in Sellafield, in the nuclear plant. He stood up and said, I work in Sellafield and a lot of people in this room would have a serious problem with

what I do and the type of things I produce. But the difference between myself and a sex worker is that I have full labour and human rights, I'm legal and I have health and safety regulations and protective equipment and so on and a sex worker does not have any of that. And I thought that was a really good argument, whatever it is you think about prostitution, whether you think it's morally wrong and so on you should still join in solidarity with this group of workers and support our fight for rights.

<http://www.iusw.org>

<http://iww.org.uk>

Warzone Collective

By Jimmy Segus



If you haven't already heard the Warzone Collective in Belfast got back together this year and are working towards re-establishing an autonomous social centre in the city. Warzone started out around 1984 dissatisfied with a lack of space for punk bands to practice and play. They opened Giro's in 1986; moving to a larger building in 1991 but eventually closed shop at the end of 2003 due to a dwindling volunteer pool.

But throughout those 17 years the centre, although initially inspired by the DiY anarchist idea became a focal point for the wider counter culture in the city, embracing a variety of campaigns and organisations as well as being the only non-sectarian venue in the city during the conflict here.

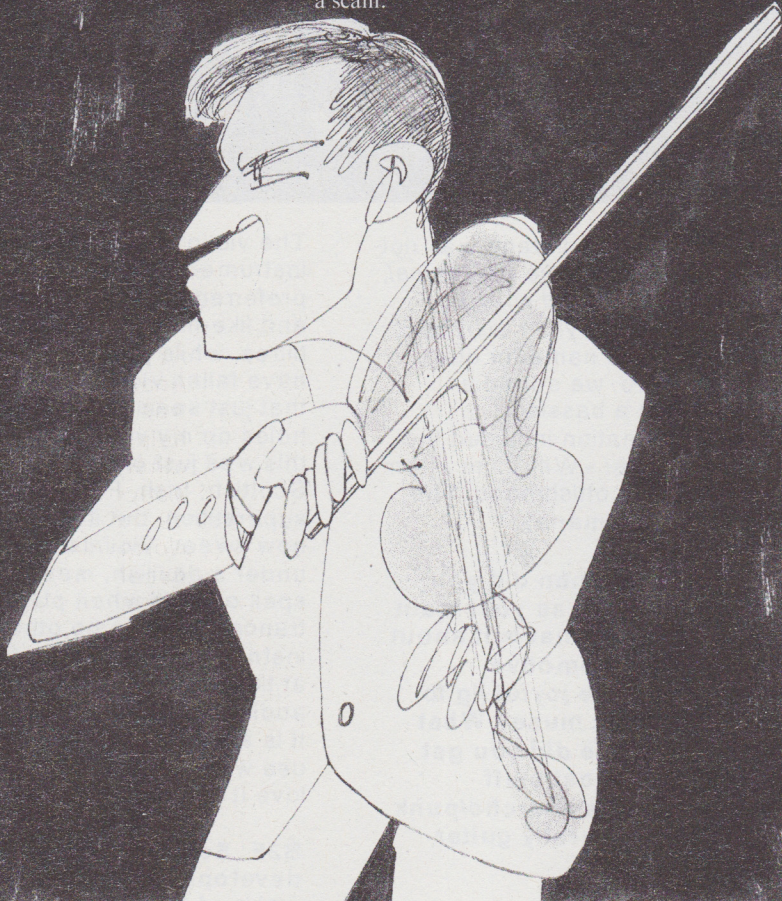
We are currently viewing premises and getting to grips with current legislation as well as organising multiple benefits. Our new website will be up soon but for more information or if you think you can help out get in touch with us at: warzonecollective@riseup.net

Norman Nawrocki



Ex-Rhythm Activism performer and anarchist activist talks with back2front

WHY I AM AN ANARCHIST? "Because old age pensioners eat dog food because single moms on welfare cry. Because politicians steal our future so that women can't walk the street safely. Because I want to breathe clean air. Because Hope, Freedom & Dignity are never on special at Wal-Mart. Because Capitalism is a scam."



Artwork from the "Inspired Agitators" series by David Lester

Norman Nawrocki is an anarchist performer from Canada. I first came across him as part of the anarcho band Rhythm Activism on a compilation tape called *The CIA Tapes* on Bluurg Records around 1987. Fast-forward a few years and I spot Rhythm Activism on an AK Press benefit and ended up tracking down a few other recordings. Rhythm Activism charted on radio worldwide, performed highly memorable theatrical musical shows, and toured their issue-oriented 'resistance cabarets' across Canada, the USA and Europe. They would perform a riotous brand of independent, theatrical, music and song in English, French, Italian and Polish, winning over fans everywhere. They appeared on stage as a duo, a

four to seven piece band, or with a supporting cast of 50 dancers, jugglers, musicians, acrobats, clowns and actors in a madcap, Felliniesque, anti-poverty "community circus cabaret."

They played in theatres, punk clubs, poetry festivals, international jazz and folk festivals, on the barricades at demonstrations, or at traditional Ukrainian weddings. Their music is a cutting-edge, hybrid of folk punk, country and eastern, gypsy grunge, urban rat jazz, lounge core and infectious, East European dance tunes.

Satirical and hard-hitting, they've taken on issues of the day using costumes, masks

and vaudeville to turn serious politics into subversive but hilarious living theatre.

During the 78 day armed standoff at OKA, Québec, Mohawk Warriors blasted the military with songs from an RA native solidarity album. Striking, Montréal students requested a picket-line song from RA and were handed a finished album four days later. RA released an anti-war album within days of the 1991 Gulf War. One of their CD's 'Blood & Mud', about the roots of the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, Mexico, was considered by *OPTION* magazine as 'mandatory listening for members of Congress'. It even earned a personal thank you letter from Subcommandante Marcos, deep in the jungles.

But Rhythm Activism is only one of the projects Norman has been involved with. What is fascinating about Nawrocki is the amount of stuff he's done, a literal one man cottage industry involved in over 50 albums as well as being a zine-writer, poet, novelist, playwright, performer and activist. Your intrepid reporter was immediately dispatched to track down the ever creative Nawrocki!

B2F: How did you get into Rhythm Activism and the ideas of anarchism initially? How was the anarchist scene in Canada at the time?

NN: The beginning: Imagine an innocent 14 year old kid, browsing through the shelves of his high school library. On a wire rack, he spots a paperback with an intriguing title: *'The Anarchists,'* subtitled, *'From Diderot to Camus, from Thoreau to Vanzetti, a ringing roll-call of the great non-conformists and dissenters,'* edited by Irving L. Horowitz. He starts reading the book and takes it home.

He spends the entire night in bed reading, unable to put it down, nodding his head on every page, identifying with every thought, realizing this book is speaking to him. A few days later, he

proclaims himself an anarchist. At school, he starts writing papers about the Idea. Teachers scratch their heads. Other students don't really understand what he is talking about. But he persists. He searches for other books about Anarchism, and devours them, one after the other, studying the history, the practice, the concepts. It takes him a few years before he finally meets other anarchists in the city of Vancouver, BC, Canada where he lives. He joins a small 'Anarchist study group' at university, participates in meetings, and tries to learn as much as he can from his new anarchist friends. Eventually, he works on the international anarchist news-journal that is published in Vancouver called *The Open Road*. Through the journal, he meets other anarchists worldwide. His circle grows, as does his appreciation of the Idea.

At the time, in the late 1970s, the Anarchist movement in Canada was quite small. *The Open Road* helped it grow and inspired many other publications coast-to-coast. Vancouver was considered in 1977 to be 'the Barcelona of North America.' There were a few dozen anarchist, anarcho-feminist, anarcho-syndicalist, anarcho-pacifist groups in existence in the city. In addition to the quarterly, *The Open Road*, there was an anarchist monthly, and an anarchist bi-weekly being published. There were anarchist study groups at all three post-secondary campuses, and anarchist activists scattered across the city in trade unions, community groups, women's groups, anti-prison groups, etc. Anarchist May Day celebrations drew over 1,000 people. Canada's foremost punk bands of the hour, **D.O.A.** and **The Subhumans** helped support the anarchist scene. People from around the world moved to Vancouver to be part of the movement. It was an exciting period of growth. Things changed after the arrest of the Vancouver armed struggle group Direct Action, later known as The Vancouver Five. Intense State repression followed, and the local scene suffered.

Rhythm Activism came together after a drunken night of poetry. I met the most amazing guitarist ever to come out of Montreal - Sylvain Côté - and we formed a 'poetry/music ensemble' in 1985. A few months earlier, audience members told me that my so-called 'poetry' which I had



performed alone on stage was not really poetry: *'it's more rhythmical, more like rhythm and activism, yes, it is kind of rhythm activism.'* We adopted the name for our duo. Over time, we added a drummer and a bassist. Our last incarnation included the former drummer - Wilf Plum - from the amazing Scottish band, **The Dog Faced Hermans**.....

B2F: How and when did you pick up the violin as your main instrument and what is it about it that captures emotive feelings from the joyful jig to the melancholic muse? What kind of response did you get initially when most stuff coming from the anarcho/punk school was generally guitar-orientated?

NN: I started playing violin when I was 6 years old. My parents bought a cheap, toy model, put it in my hands, and told me I could learn how to play this thing. I scratched and sawed away until I was about 12 years old, then gave it up to join my buddies who kept calling outside my window to come and play soccer (football - Ed) with them. I packed the violin away and didn't play again until I was 30 years old.

Then, by chance, after meeting this amazing guitarist, Sylvain Côté, who co-founded **Rhythm Activism** with me, I suggested we try to play together and I tried to keep up with him. As a duo, the violin/guitar thing worked. We had a unique sound, especially compared to all the other punkish bands out there. Unlike today, few bands in the mid-80s used violins. And people loved the sound.

The violin is a very special instrument, known to be the preferred habitat of devilish spirits and like-minded demons. Many times, while playing alone, I, too, have fallen victim to their spell that just seems to drift out the 'f' holes on my violin. I used to think this was just old English, Scottish, Irish, Polish, or Chinese superstition, but it is true. I can now swear. Violinists can fall under a devilish, mesmerizing spell of sorts when playing, a trance-like state no other instrument seems to induce, and at times, can put listening audiences under the same spell. It is an awesome super power I use with caution. Punks seem to love it as much as non-punks.

B2F: So how has anarchism developed in Canada in the wake of 9/11 and your country's support for the Bush/Bliar misadventure in the Middle East? I hear there is a lot of patriotism creeping into your national sport, ice hockey, for example. Are people more politicised or feeling like they lack the power to struggle against this growing nationalism?

NN: Hockey, our national sport, has yet to be infiltrated by anarchists. I think it is a missed opportunity. We could conceivably influence millions of Canadians, if we learned to play well! Consequently, anarchism, in Canada, has not grown as healthily as we would like.

It has a stunted public profile. Prior to 9/11, we were much more visible as part of the anti-globalization movement. We have lost much ground, and must re-think our expansionist strategies if

we are to move forward in the public eye. Having said this, it should be noted that in Montreal, of all places, we anarchists have a very high profile that seems to be growing. This year we celebrated the 10th annual *Montreal Anarchist Bookfair*, with some several thousand people passing through the event.

Our *Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival*, now in its 4th year, again drew several hundred mostly non-anarchists to the two day event, and received major coverage in local daily newspapers. We have our moments of glory in the public eye, but not enough. We need to work harder on our outreach and explanation campaigns. I cannot honestly say more people are currently politicized. More people than ever before refuse to participate in electoral farces, and more people than ever before are mistrusting of politicians, so I think, the times are more favorable than ever to anarchist propositions. We just need to speak up more to be heard.

B2F: Are you a fan of ice hockey? Have you ever played against DOA?

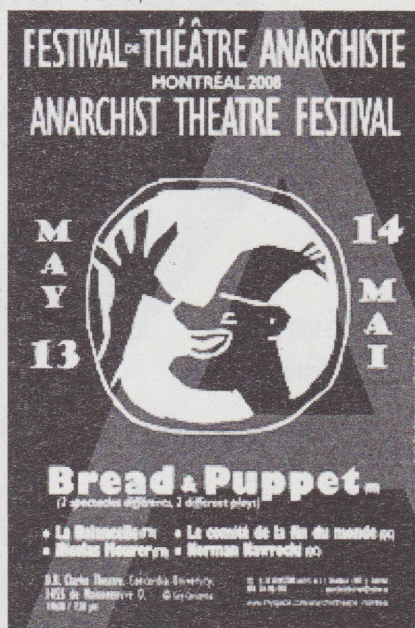
NN: I hate hockey and never played against DOA. I have had them sleep on my floor, fed them, cheered them in life and career, but never played hockey with them.

B2F: As well as Rhythm Activism you have branched off in numerous directions musically - can you tell us about a few of your other projects? What have you been up to recently, and have we heard the last of Rhythm Activism?

NN: For now, yes, RIP Rhythm Activism. Two reunion shows with *The Ex* in Montreal, a few years ago was our last public appearance. My other musical projects are varied:



1. Solo - I play a lot of solo, amplified, sampled, looped violin with or without live spoken word on top;
2. I have a classical harpist/amplified violin duo (*The Anarchist and The Harpist*) with a fabulous woman from the Quebec Symphony Orchestra. She rocks;
3. I have a duo, **SAAN**, with a super talented bassist, who also plays Chapman Stick Bass; I play viola/violin;
4. I have an off again on again trio with an experimental jazz trio, the *Montreal/Manhattan Project*, with trumpet/flute, effects, violin/cello;



5. I have an East European influenced instrumental string ensemble, *DaZoque!*, with two violins, cello, bass, guitar and drums.....

B2F: Now this will tickle the fancy of some of our readers but how did you end up turning into a seven foot penis and what is the main thrust of your sex shows?

NN: A former girlfriend was assaulted in the street not far from my apartment, near Montreal's McGill University. My initial reaction was to want to follow her around with a baseball bat, and find the asshole. Instead, I wrote a solo cabaret show about stopping violence against women which I wanted to stage in my apartment. I would rearrange the apartment and turn it into a small temporary cabaret, borrowing chairs to seat about 20 guys. I thought I could poster the neighbourhood - a student enclave - and entice local guys to come to my show and reach them

using theatre, mixed in with comedy. They wouldn't know the true content of my *'I Don't Understand Women!'* show until they had sat through the first 10 minutes or so. Friends said this wouldn't work, unless I offered free beer, and suggested that since there was a ready-made, captive audience of men already on campus, I should stage the show there. I did. Over 300 people - men and women attended. Word spread to other campuses about this serious comedy/non-comedy show with a message, and I was invited to perform elsewhere. Since 1993, I have now performed this show at a few hundred campuses across Canada and the USA. I subsequently wrote three other 'sex' comedy cabarets. I play up to 14 characters per show, and sometimes dress up as a giant penis, a giant vagina, a giant asshole, and a 3 metre tall dancing singing buttplug.

My shows entertain and teach people about sexual politics, sexual health, stopping violence against women, gays and lesbians, and how to have better, healthier, more equal sexual relations. Each of the 4 sex shows has a different theme. I estimate about a million people have seen all my shows now.

B2F: That's pretty amazing - do you find that a lot of people are very uneducated and closed minded about sex and gender issues in general or are they more open-minded and interested in exploring these issues? I guess a lot of people aren't aware of a number of aspects of sexual health for example?

NN: I would say that people generally are basically under-educated about their own sexuality - this goes for those who are straight, gay, lesbian, bi, trans, whatever - but always, always, very curious and open to learning more. We think we live in a society that has greater access than ever before to information about our own health and well-being, but in fact, people are dumber than ever. I often hear questions like *'If I practice oral sex, I can't get a sexually transmitted infection, can I?'* Or, *'Can I get pregnant if I swallow his cum?'* Or, *'I didn't know I had a 'G' spot!'* (Men). Then there are the people who still think they can have sex without using a condom, without protecting their life and the lives of others. Stupid!

As for gender issues, that is another question. This is the 21st century, and still we must deal with violence against women, against the queer community, sexism in all its ugly forms, unhealthy relationships – even within the anarchist and other so-called 'progressive' communities. The Patriarchy is still alive and dominant. Heterosexism is still rampant. Homophobia has not disappeared.

B2F: But do anarchists make better lovers?

When people ask me, 'Do anarchists make better lovers?' I reply: 'Only the ones who have attended my sex shows!'

B2F: Norman, you are also a novelist, can you tell us a little about your recent book?

'*The Anarchist & The Devil Do Cabaret*' (Black Rose Books, 2004) is a collection of short stories, journal entries and historical letters from the 1930s - 1990s. It is based on a Rhythm Activism band tour of Europe. It has now been translated and published in French and Italian.

'*Breakfast for Anarchists*' (No Bar Code, 2008), is the first of my *Brain Food Trilogy*, a collection of my anarchist poetry. '*Lunch for Insurgents*' (Les Pages Noires, 2009) is the second volume in this series. '*Dinner for Dissidents*' (Les Pages Noires, 2009) will be the third.

I am currently working on a romantic, historical, political novel about anti-fascism in Italy, the role of anarchists in this movement, and the current persecution of Roma refugees across Italy.

B2F: Why did you choose the Roma in Italy in particular, was it because of your own cultural heritage or other reasons? Is there much anarchist support for the Roma in Italy today?

NN: When I first toured Italy in 2008 with the Italian translation of my book, '*The Anarchist & the Devil Do Cabaret*,' I was shocked to see and hear news reports about the criminalization and demonization of Roma refugees across the country. It made no sense. It seemed to be a case of reality transformed into fiction, of the newest scapegoated ethnic minority now blasted onto the front pages and evening news and blamed for every problem



CAZZAROLA!

Anarchy, Mussolini, the Roma, Italy today

A one-man play
with Montreal's

Norman Nawrocki

Sat Jan 3

2009, 7:30pm

Rhizome Café

317 East Broadway
tel: 604.872.3166

www.nothingness.org/music/rhythm
FLAVIO COSTANTINI Gino Lucetti

currently occupying the public imagination in the country. The Italian Right seized the opportunity, fanned the flames of xenophobic racism and country-wide fear and used the Roma refugees as a springboard to win country-wide elections on a platform of '*Rid Italy of the rabble!*' I was shocked, and researched the story behind the fiction, connecting the dots from the history of Italian Fascism to the rise to power of the neo-Fascists today. The end of WWII we know did not mean the end of the Fascists. They went undercover for many years, and now, have resurfaced as the governing power

of Italy. Thankfully, anarchists and other anti-racists and anti-Fascists are supporting the Roma.

B2F: In your play *Cazzarola* we meet an anarchist who is attempting to blow up Mussolini. This isn't *propaganda by the deed* but a matter of *necessity* in the play - how do you feel about the physical force tradition in anarchism? It is often misunderstood and adherents are often accused of ruining nonviolent protest. But isn't nonviolent protest actually ineffective and wouldn't a diversity of tactics in relative

situations be more useful in furthering struggle?

NN: A diversity of tactics makes complete sense in any struggle. Flexibility is the key to effective action. Nonviolent protest has its time, its role, too. But popular mass actions are obviously the ideal.

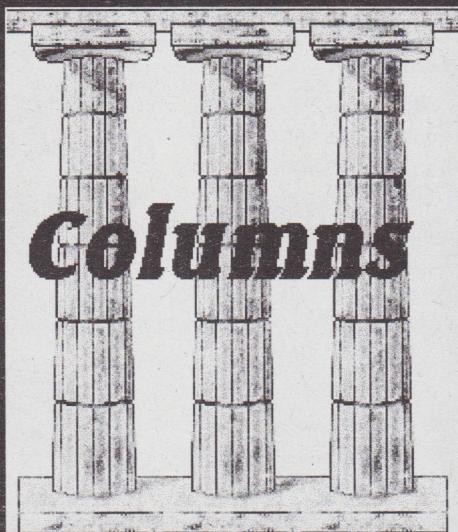
(For a clip from the play *Cazzarola* check out:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CB5d6RtMg>)

B2F: As someone involved in the anarchist movement for a long time in what area do you think anarchists should concentrate – agitation in the workplace and fighting for workers rights, or working on their own personal lives? Some anarchists think the latter is a lifestyle choice while the former is the real centre of struggle?

NN: There is no one single 'front' that we should work on – all are equally important, all play a role in advancing the cause of freedom. We need to be conscious at all times, in our own lives, about our attitudes, behaviour, and lifestyles to ensure that we never become complacent with what we believe is the only way to live, regardless of the changes taking place around us, among family, friends and loved ones. Sometimes we can become too pre-occupied with 'other' struggles, 'other' fronts, deeming them 'more central, more critical' than ones closer to home, and forget our own personal lives and the importance of being vigilant about maintaining healthy relationships with ourselves and others. But also, we need to be ever vigilant about the world that surrounds us, about the importance of standing up, speaking up and fighting for the rights of all, workers, the unemployed, students, the young, the old, the infirm, the voiceless – whoever gets shunted aside by this parasitical system we call Capitalism and its apologists. What we do as anarchists is a 24/7 pre-occupation. We need to remind ourselves constantly that the goal is a better world for all – ourselves included. Consequently, we each choose our fronts, our battles, our priorities, but remember that they are all inter connected.

<http://www.nothingness.org>

http://www.buyolympia.com/q/lt-em=mec_agposters



Negative Reaction

by Trev Hagl

"They've got you where they want you"

A right wing government, a right wing opposition and a right wing working class. It's as if punk rock had never happened. We SHOULD be shouting "FUCK YOU" like the days of the Poll Tax or Miners Strike, NOT acting as cheerleaders for hateful media tycoons. Immigrants. Benefit fraudsters. Or even better, immigrants fiddling benefits. Give us a scapegoat and we might not notice all the millionaire tax dodgers, fat cat pensions, rampant privatisation, big brother state and all the jobs ending up in the hands of agency leeches.

They cry crocodile tears at all the job losses but really they LOVE it. The more on the dole, the more competition for shit jobs, and the less secure those still in employment are; almost every employer turning into a Victorian taskmaster, barking orders like a tyrant and any dissent answered with the cry of "you're lucky to have a job son".

For Murdoch, for New Labour Bilderberg stooges like Mandelson, this is all wanking material. The peasants forced to grovel.

And while the Nazis are knocking on doors, talking to ordinary people, we are bickering amongst ourselves. Anarchist vs socialist vs (insert obscure brand of lefty politics here). Petty differences blown up

into internet wars; bitching, criticism, moaning. Compare that to NO2ID who invite support from ANYONE as long as they disagree with the big brother state, thus making headway and causing real embarrassment for the power mad government of ours.

I am glad to still be part of punk rock, because it's the only place these days where you WON'T be likely to hear ordinary people preach hateful and divisive tabloid propaganda. But at the same time the sniping amongst relatively like minded people astounds me, as does the elitism and arrogance from certain quarters.

It's time to ditch the intellectual posturing, PC pedantry and internal squabbling and start connecting with real people again. Stop analysing and nitpicking and focus on the real issues. And get a fucking sense of humour!

Climate Changing Minds

by Frank Mitchell



In the last issue of back2front a hefty article on climate change was featured, a major issue that shouldn't be overlooked but it's been fascinating to see the range of responses that came in from it as a result. There were those who, like unelected PM Gordon Brown, thought it was "just middle class stuff" (so that's ok then, only the middle classes will be affected by it... and er doesn't that include Mr. Brown?) to those who still think it's a capitalist conspiracy to get us to buy more products; so hasn't capitalism being doing its best to get us to part with our cash for a

couple of hundred years before all this kicked off? True the green-washing of corporations has been exploited as a useful facade when their dodgy environmental practices are exposed and companies have always used guilt as a means to sell products - have you changed your light bulbs? - but you can't escape the science. I dug into the science and researched the latest data I could find and 99% of the worlds experts agreed while those who didn't had corporate interests at the top of their agenda; that our climate was changing far more rapidly than envisaged and unless drastic steps are taken in the next few years there might be nothing we can do to stop it spiraling out of control.

And there are still people who think it means everything will just get warmer so they can get a better tan or improve the THC content of their skunk plants? It means that ALL aspects of climate will be upset - colder, wetter and more severe winters, wet muggy summers (we've had 3 in a row over here), stronger storms and hurricanes (more disasters like the Asian Tsunami), flooding (In Egypt the Nile Delta provides most of the country's food, and if floods continue the entire agricultural industry could be lost to quote just one example), forest fires, extinction of animals (bees are facing considerable problems and as they are the main pollinators of crops again agriculture is at risk), crop failures due to warmer and wetter summers are becoming commonplace. In reality we are talking massive extinction, displacement and destruction of life as we know it within our own lifetimes. That's what the science says. Feel free to check it out for yourself.

I must confess I'm not overly enamoured by the diablo-twirling, bongo-bashing, face-painted liberals who scale buildings with banners or dander along a pre-ordained police-friendly route to persuade our

illustrious leaders to move a little faster while getting a bit upset when the cops bash their skulls in even when they kindly keep turning the other cheek. These are the happy hippies whose class consciousness begins and ends with their climate camps. Now don't get me wrong I think it's great to see people taking action but it has to be said that urging leaders at climate camp talks not to bow to economic pressure (as if) and sort it all out (as if we can't) is about as useful as an ice cream in Satan's sauna. Because these are the most vocal of campaigners (and the media likes to portray it that way) it does create an image of liberal middle-class protest which is ultimately ineffective. Government will always bow to corporate interests because government is run by corporate interests and until capitalism is directly challenged token gestures will be the sum of the suits in office.

But to be fair some aspects of climate camp deserve applause too. The sustainable camp structure proves there are alternatives that could be implemented beyond light bulbs and the tactic of disruption helps to alert members of the public to the danger. But the question has to be asked - why should we the people trust the corporate stooges in government to sort out the mess they created when the only way to do that is to remove corporate influence and government itself once and for all? So until we escalate the action the future does indeed look very grim.

OUR BASIC POSITION ON CLIMATE CHANGE: "When you consider that climate change is caused by the over-consumption of fossil fuels by the rich, often extracted at the expense of the poor; that the first people to feel the effects of climate change are the poor because only the rich can pay for expensive adaptation measures; that the process which is designed to prevent climate change is dominated by the rich, who

come up with solutions that displace the poor but make money for the rich; then you stop seeing climate change as a problem of atmosphere and gases and start seeing it as a problem of class war."

GETTING FUCKING REAL

by Ruth Less



Hogg used expenses to clean moat

Politicians get caught with their pants down and the media goes all big and scary with headlines like "outrage in parliament" - ministers are said to have been "scathing" as they "lambasted" the right honourable fuckface for using taxpayers' money to have his ass wiped. You know the one where they make it out like something is being done about the latest scandal, when in actual fact sweet fuck all is happening.

So when the politicians gets "severely reprimanded" and "harsh words" were said while "angry exchanges" in "heated debates" ensued - nobody goes to prison, their lives ruined: even in the rare event when a politician has to stand down, their pension secure and enough perks for another holiday home, the obligatory good reference (they represented we the people after all) will soon have them in the boardroom knobbing with the CEOs or making shite speeches on the *Return to Responsible Capitalism* or *Faith and Globalisation* that nobody wants to hear on the has-been circuit among polite clapping and bucket shaking.

But if any one of us miss a mortgage payment; if any one of us is snared doing the double in order to make ends meet; if any single one of us doesn't pay any of a myriad fines for non-payment of some rip-off tax or another - are hasty words cast in our direction as reprimands? No, we're up in front of the fucking magistrate guilty for being working class, given hefty fines, condemned as social pariahs for not paying the TV license or tossed into the cells. Made an example of.

And when we stand up to it, some fucking liberal apologist, whose gone straight from college into the soft pillow of salary, tells us something is being done with all the soothing, wet, middle-class-assuring buzz words, doesn't it make the fucking blood boil?

What is being done as another teenager, barely able to think for themselves, is blown to fucking pieces in a far-off desert to maintain an oil economy under the old lie of nationalism? What is being done as more and more limited resources are being ripped off the back of desperate workers fighting to feed their families in far off lands while their spirit is crushed and their children die daily in their arms? What is being done about the immigrants forced to flee the land they know to come to these shores to be met by unwelcoming bigots and state jack boots? Fear not, raised voices in parliament have been heard. All is well at midnight.

Unemployment soars as recession hits home. 75% in some places. The economy is nearing collapse so the government mysteriously comes up with all the money it said it never had for health and education to prop up the banks, who in turn pay themselves huge bonuses while the usual suspects reveal record profits. Meanwhile small business goes into decline and corporations fill the gap in the steady erosion of culture.

If you're lucky enough not to have lost your job you still have to face rocketing fuel prices and rising costs for food on top of struggling to pay the bastard mortgage and wondering where you're going to get the fucking money to clothe your kids.

The guilt-ridden middle classes, a buffer zone to keep those at the bottom from those at the top, then appear, draping banners saying "*Stop you rotters*" across prominent buildings or placards with "*Down with that sort of thing*" emblazoned across them - there they are over there sat down - "*we shall, we shall not be moved*", before being pepper-sprayed, truncheoned and chased home for their 3 course organic buffet by the heavy hand of the State.

Lest I remind you class is an attitude and does not exclude those born into more privileged backgrounds through no fault of their own. But protest in this country is a fucking joke nowadays because it is often confined to the token pacifism mentioned above so isn't it time to get real?

When raised voices in parliament is the only punishment for the errant politician, when an easily-paid fine is the only punishment for corporate mismanagement and when protest is confined, restricted and monitored rendering it ineffective, then what other fucking choices do we have!

Big Nothing Party

By AK Chesterton

When the BBC announced that it was to permit Nick Griffin, the leader of the British Nazi Party to appear on its flagship political TV show "*Question Time*" it created a storm of controversy. Old debates of freedom of speech and censorship resurfaced. Should freedom of speech be granted to the Far Right and if not would such censorship drive them deeper underground where they are less exposed to analysis, and where they might be more attractive to those with little between their ears?

If freedom of speech is permitted then you risk creating a platform, which otherwise might not have existed. But which of these two opinions holds up? The only way to tell is to quantify each idea. There were protests across the UK on the day of the broadcast. While freedom of speech is enshrined in UK law it seems that the majority of people feared that the TV appearance created a platform for the white supremacists.

After the broadcast the BNP were the top search item on several search engines online while the party claims to have had a surge in membership. In other words the TV appearance raised their profile as many had feared. Since Griffin took over the BNP from John Tyndall in 1999 he has followed the European model of dressing white power fantasy in the clothes of respectable party politics, and using existing human rights legislation to play the victim. It works to an extent.

The reality on the ground though is that although the BNP won more seats in recent elections it was because of lower voter turnout from those disgusted by the Neo Labour agenda rather than an increase in support. It is currently thought to have about 0.7% of the vote but considering that 30-40% of people never vote anyway we can see just how small the group really is.

But it is easy to overlook the enemy. While the politics of the Far Right are anathema to the vast majority they are also a distraction. On the same panel on the "*Question Time*" show was Jack Straw, a central figure of both Blair and Brown's government and responsible for hundreds of thousands of deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan; bringing unemployment back up to Thatcher levels; promoting an abusive immigration policy and much else besides. Shouldn't we have protested him and his party who have been far more destructive than Griffin and his Nazis will ever be in their lifetimes?



FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

The rise and fall and resurgence of anarchism in Russia

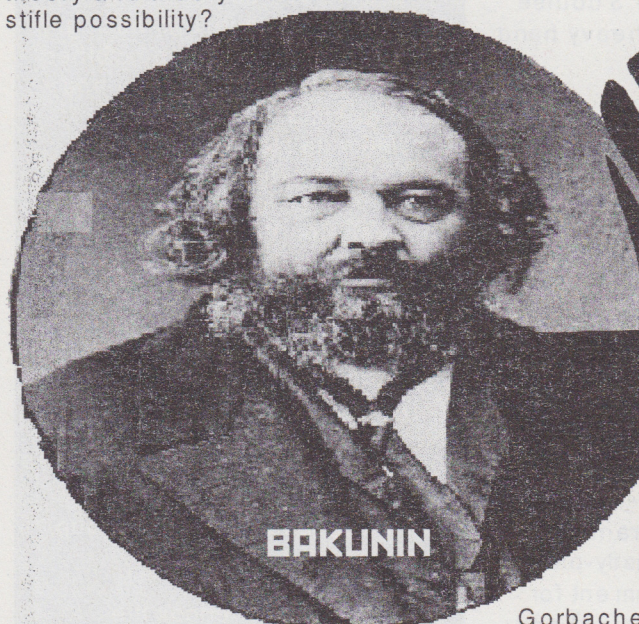
Anarchism has evolved through many traditions, times and places but some of the most important developments in early anarchist thought came from thinkers in Russia. Now a lot of people are put off by 'theory' because it is often a product of time and place but come the glorious day what are people going to do, unless they have already considered the possibilities and prepared for it? If conditions allowed for a revolution to take place, what then, when action without theory and theory without action stifle possibility?

('restructuring') introduced in 1986-1987 and *Glasnost* ('transparency' or 'openness') the following year effectively created greater freedom of speech and began the end of the old regime but also a plunge into economic chaos. At the same time *Glasnost*, offering more freedom of expression inadvertently gave rise to long-suppressed nationalist sentiment in the Soviet Republics.

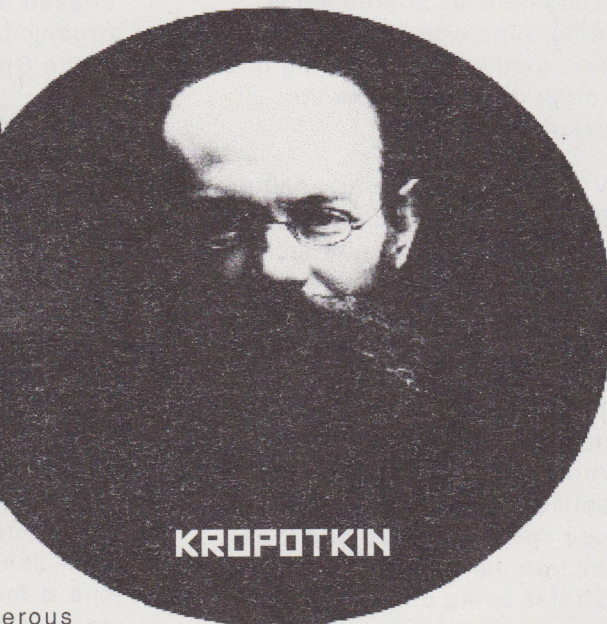
A Soviet coup in 1991 attempted to remove

from Russian thinkers like Bakunin and Kropotkin and what relevance do they have today?

This article is in two parts. The first deals with the rise of anarchism in Russia and particularly Bakunin, Kropotkin and Makhno. The second part is an interview with a comrade in Russia looking at the rise of punk rock in Russia and the revival of anarchism there today.



BAKUNIN



KROPOTKIN

The great anarchist experiment in Spain 1936-37 could not have taken place unless years of agitation and preparation had not precipitated it.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 which promised so much to workers was seized by Lenin and his Bolshevik Party heralding the end of old Russia and the rise of what would become the Soviet Union, one of the most ruthless dictatorships of modern history. It remains a reminder of both the potential and the failure of revolutionary anarchism. The Party ruled Russia with an iron fist and revealed the failure of Marxist ideology as a revolutionary model.

The coming of Mikhail Gorbachev to power in 1985 however and his economic policy of *Perestroika*

Gorbachev while numerous satellite republics declared their independence. Gorbachev resigned and Boris Yeltsin, tempered by vodka and years of back-room dealing with the Capitalist dogs of the West, collapsed the old regime, eventually banning the Communist Party in 1991 and ushering in a wave of privatisation.

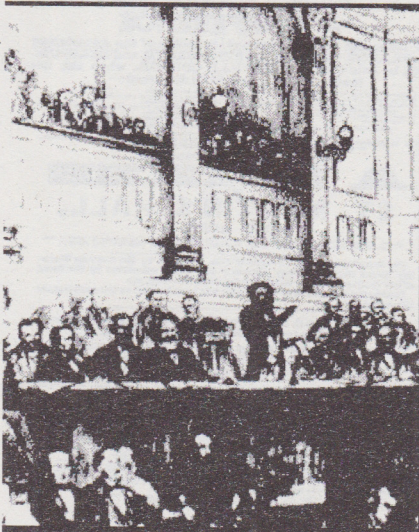
Yeltsin exited through the back door of politics when the economy began to crash and when the corruption was a little too obvious. In return for 'no questions asked' about his involvement in dodgy business dealings which gave rise to the Russian oligarchy, a fresh-faced Vladimir Putin was pushed centre stage bringing neoliberal economics tinged with a KGB agenda to the masses.

But what happened to the anarchist ideas which came

Going back to 1848 we find that there was a wave of revolutions across Europe. Although most of these rebellions were soon crushed, in Italy and Germany for example, the revolution in France had put an end to the monarchy there and ushered in many new ideas including the notion that the people could rule themselves. A young Russian philosophy student with an aristocratic background, Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876), had made his way to Paris where he kept company with Karl Marx and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and other libertarian thinkers of the day and where he began the development of his own radicalism. He spoke out strongly against Russia's oppressive treatment of Poland and in the year of the revolution he was arrested for his participation in the Czech Rebellion and deported back to

Russia. There he was imprisoned until 1857 before being exiled to Siberia. His health would never be the same again.

Bakunin managed to escape however and made his way to Japan, through the USA and on to London. But by now, and especially in lieu of his dramatic escape, he had become a popular, mystical and radical figure despite his criminal status. In 1870 he was part of the insurrection in Lyon which would pave the way for the great Paris Commune of 1871. This short-lived insurrection in Paris was widely regarded as the first instance where workers seized power and would become central to the debates that followed in the growing radical tradition across Europe.



IWA First Meeting 1864
First International London

In 1868 Bakunin had joined the *International Working Men's Association* (IWA), which included many radical trade unionists and socialist thinkers of the day. By 1872, following the Paris Commune, that group was dominated by Karl Marx, arguing for the inclusion of parliamentary elections (the Revolutionary Party), and Bakunin, whose opposition to Marx would eventually lead to a vote which Bakunin's faction lost. The faction were expelled from the International due to Bakunin's involvement in a secret society within the IWA, mentioned in several of his writings as being responsible for directing revolution, ironically a form of government in itself, though it is important to appreciate the secret nature of any revolutionary society in those times.



Carving from the
1871 Paris Commune

Throughout this period Bakunin developed his ideas of anarchism and produced many of his most famous works including *God and the State* and was involved in the rise of European libertarian socialism and radical culture until his death in 1876.

In *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State* (1871) he wrote:

"I am a convinced advocate of economic and social equality because I know that, without it, liberty, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals, as well as the prosperity of nations, will never amount to more than a pack of lies. But since I stand for liberty as the primary condition of mankind, I believe that equality must be established in the world by the spontaneous organization of labour and the collective ownership of property by freely organized producer associations, and by the equally spontaneous federation of communes, to replace the domineering paternalistic State."

Initially drawn to communism, Bakunin knew that workers must rise up and overcome the state but like many radicals of the time still in the throes of the French Revolution, nationalism played a central role. In 19th century Europe, theories of nationalism, socialism, and liberalism were closely intertwined. In *Appeal to the Slavs* (1848), he had proposed that Slav revolutionaries unite with Hungarian, Italian and German workers to overthrow the three major European autocracies, the Russian Empire, the Austro-Hungarian

Empire, and the Kingdom of Prussia - that is, an uprising of "*all oppressed nationalities*". Bakunin was also an early proponent of a United States of Europe. By 1863 after the Polish insurrection however he began to reject nationalism after seeing the Polish nationalists were more interested in Ukrainian lands than the plight of Ukrainian peasants. At a conference in Geneva in 1867 he denounced nationalism and was concerned by the "*self-containment of communes*".

Anarchists who had found something of note in nationalism had often argued that the 'nation' is principally a *people*; that the state is a parasite upon this 'nation' and should not be confused with it; and that since in reality States rarely coincide with national entities, the ideal of the Nation State is actually a myth often perpetuated for the economic interests of elites. Anarchists tend to oppose national liberation struggles as a result.

In *Catechism of a Revolutionary* (1866) Bakunin demands:

"Absolute rejection of every authority including that which sacrifices freedom for convenience of the State."

Bakunin defended and promoted the Paris Commune and called on workers to rise up in rebellion against the State and to organise revolutionary socialism using propaganda by the deed. He differed significantly from Marx in that respect for he saw the spectre of the State within Marxist doctrine.

While both agreed that workers should rise against the State Marx offered that a '*dictatorship of the proletariat*' must be created as a transition towards communism. Bakunin countered that Marx would simply replace one tyranny with another and that hierarchy would remain. Did people need to be enslaved before they could be free?

In *Statism and Anarchism* (1873) he argued:

"They [the Marxists] maintain that only a dictatorship—their dictatorship, of course—can create the will of the people, while our answer to this is: No dictatorship can have any other aim but that of self-perpetuation

perpetuation, and it can beget only slavery in the people tolerating it; freedom can be created only by freedom, that is, by a universal rebellion on the part of the people and free organization of the toiling masses from the bottom up."

History has proven Bakunin was correct as subsequent regimes based on Marxism in Russia, China, Cuba or Korea have established in more recent times.

The Marxist analysis and critique of capitalism, widely regarded in its time and to this day, offered the development of socialist principles into communist ones and yet Marx writes:

"When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class."

But how was the temporary revolutionary state envisioned by Marx meant to transform into the communist society he propounded? If the communist revolutionaries simply replaced the bourgeoisie with a dictatorship of the proletariat then Bakunin was right to suggest:

"The instinct of liberty is lacking in him [Marx]; he remains from head to foot, an authoritarian."

and that:

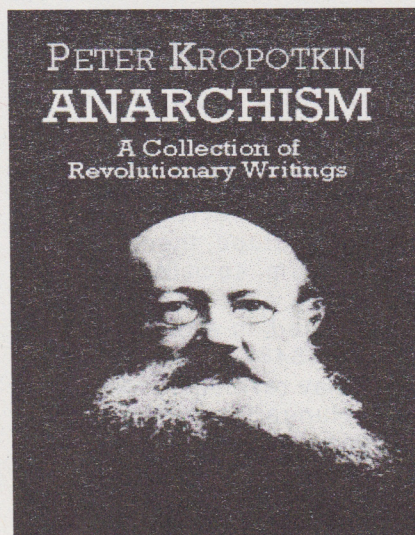
"Who says State, says power, oppression, exploitation, injustice—all these established as the prevailing system and as

the fundamental conditions of the existing society. The State never had a morality, and can never have one. Its only morality and justice is its own advantage, its own existence, and its own omnipotence at any price. Before these interests, all interests of mankind must disappear. The State is the negation of manhood."

Indeed during the years Marx spent in the British Library perfecting *Das Kapital* Bakunin was in a series of prisons, chained to walls, and losing his teeth through scurvy! But Marxist communism was popular in Russia where the concept of the Soviet, or worker's council, was also a grassroots movement towards worker control and direct democracy advocated by anarchists. But the concept of political power in the hands of anyone be it the State or a temporary revolutionary government had become anathema to anarchism. Anarcho-communism, advocated by the Russian anarchist Kropotkin (1842-1921) among others suggested that a communist society free from ALL forms of government was the only desirable aim.

Kropotkin was born in 1842 into the Russian aristocracy and joined the army but eventually grew weary of military life and threw himself into a long career of science, geography and anarchism. In 1872 he joined the *Working Men's Association* but was wary of what it viewed as socialism and began to develop his ideas towards anarchist-communism.

In *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal* (1896) 20 years after the death of Bakunin he wrote:



"Anarchy, when it works to destroy authority in all its aspects, when it demands the abrogation of laws and the abolition of the mechanism that serves to impose them, when it refuses all hierarchical organization and preaches free agreement — at the same time strives to maintain and enlarge the precious kernel of social customs without which no human or animal society can exist. Only, instead of demanding that those social customs should be maintained through the authority of a few, it demands it from the continued action of all."

Anarchist-communism was a

INTERNATIONAL WORKING MEN'S ASSOCIATION
CENTRAL COUNCIL, 18, GREEK STREET, LONDON, W.

On the 26th of September and three following days,
A CONFERENCE
of Delegates from the principal branches of the Association in FRANCE, GERMANY, SWITZERLAND, and BELGIUM, will be held with the CENTRAL COUNCIL, when the following programme will be discussed:—

1. General policy of the Congress.
2. Election of the members of the Central Council.
3. Election of the members of the Executive Committee.
4. Election of the members of the Finance Committee.
5. Election of the members of the Propaganda Committee.
6. Election of the members of the Education Committee.
7. Election of the members of the Social Science Committee.
8. Election of the members of the Artistic Committee.
9. Election of the members of the Literary Committee.
10. Election of the members of the Scientific Committee.
11. Election of the members of the Historical Committee.
12. Election of the members of the Philosophical Committee.
13. Election of the members of the Religious Committee.
14. Election of the members of the Moral Committee.
15. Election of the members of the Political Committee.
16. Election of the members of the Economic Committee.
17. Election of the members of the Social Committee.
18. Election of the members of the International Committee.
19. Election of the members of the Anarchist Committee.
20. Election of the members of the Communist Committee.

The Conference will also discuss the question of the election of the members of the Central Council, and the election of the members of the Executive Committee, and the election of the members of the Finance Committee, and the election of the members of the Propaganda Committee, and the election of the members of the Education Committee, and the election of the members of the Social Science Committee, and the election of the members of the Artistic Committee, and the election of the members of the Literary Committee, and the election of the members of the Scientific Committee, and the election of the members of the Historical Committee, and the election of the members of the Philosophical Committee, and the election of the members of the Religious Committee, and the election of the members of the Moral Committee, and the election of the members of the Political Committee, and the election of the members of the Economic Committee, and the election of the members of the Social Committee, and the election of the members of the International Committee, and the election of the members of the Anarchist Committee, and the election of the members of the Communist Committee.

And on the 28th of September,
A SOIREE
ST. MARTIN'S HALL, LONG ACRE.

The Entertainment will consist of Tea, chosen by the German Working Men's Choral Society, Operatic and other selections by the Band of the Italian Working Men's Association, Dancing, etc. During the Evening short addresses will be delivered by the continental Delegates.

Tickets to admit at half-past 7, including Tea, Concert, Addresses and Dancing, One Shilling.
Tickets to admit after Tea at half-past 8, to Concert, Addresses and Dancing, Six-pence.
DANCING AT HALF-PAST TEN.

There are also to be held the following Meetings of the Central Council:—

On Wednesday, 27th September, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Thursday, 28th September, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Friday, 29th September, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Saturday, 30th September, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Sunday, 1st October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Monday, 2nd October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Tuesday, 3rd October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Wednesday, 4th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Thursday, 5th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Friday, 6th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Saturday, 7th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Sunday, 8th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Monday, 9th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Tuesday, 10th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Wednesday, 11th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Thursday, 12th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Friday, 13th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Saturday, 14th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Sunday, 15th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Monday, 16th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Tuesday, 17th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Wednesday, 18th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Thursday, 19th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Friday, 20th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Saturday, 21st October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Sunday, 22nd October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Monday, 23rd October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Tuesday, 24th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Wednesday, 25th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Thursday, 26th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Friday, 27th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Saturday, 28th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Sunday, 29th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.
On Monday, 30th October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Tuesday, 31st October, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.	On Wednesday, 1st November, at 8 o'clock, at the Central Council, 18, Greek Street, London, W.

step further from the anarchist-collectivism which Bakunin had put forward. Collectivists, while arguing for worker control of the means of production had thought to retain the wage system but Malatesta and other anarcho-communists argued that workers collectively 'owned' what they produced and thus should have free access to the goods they produced, in effect abolishing the need for a wage system.

"Free workers, on free land, with free machinery, and freely using all the powers given to man by science, could with the greatest easiness grow the necessary food for the whole of the population" wrote Kropotkin in the anarchist journal *Freedom*, "The two great movements of our century—towards Liberty of the individual and social cooperation of the whole community—are summed up in Anarchist-Communism."

Kropotkin went on to flesh out his theories in *"The Conquest of Bread"* (1892) and *"Fields, factories and Workshops"* (1912) and these are his key works which, along with the works of Marx, were in the minds of many workers councils in Russia at the dawn of the 20th century.



In 1905 anarchist groups and others rebelled when 1000 workers were gunned down outside the Tsar's Winter Palace - a wave of unrest ensued characterised by strikes, mutiny and rebellion but the rising was crushed because while some sections of the rising were well-organised many more were not. Terror and assassination were common in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution consolidating the cloak and dagger image of the modern anarchist. The 1907 *Pacification Programme* was used to crush the dangerous current of anarchism and within 2 years most anarchists were dead, jailed or in exile. It is also to this period that Rudolf Rocker ascribes the origins of the prisoner support network, the Anarchist Black Cross.

But the rise of the soviet workers councils was also compounded by the further economic poverty imposed by Russia's involvement in World War I commanded by the Tsar himself. The harsh winter of 1917 and the realities of famine drove workers back to rebellion.

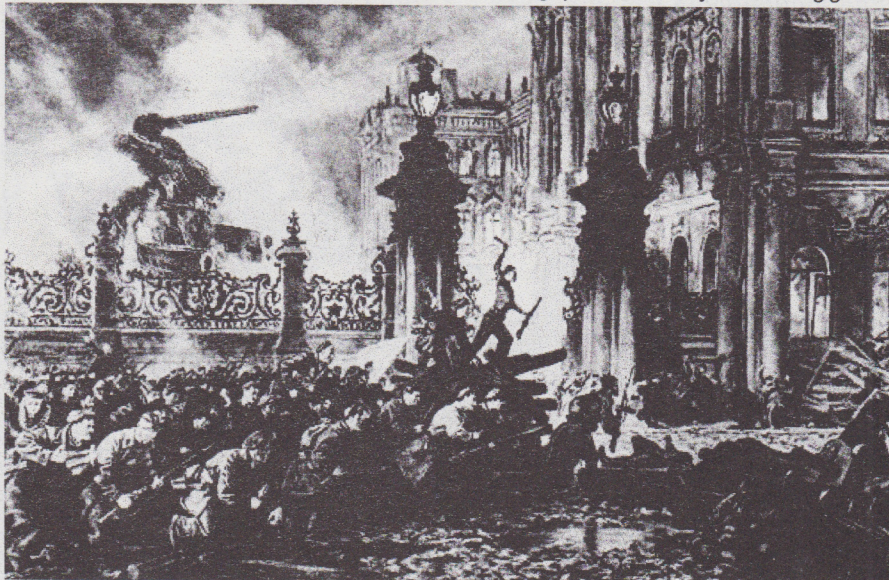
In February 1917 the workers again rose in revolution. Riots and mutinies ensued. While the old Tsarist dynasty collapsed the temporary government that quickly moved in to take its place opened the prisons, redistributed private property and workers soviets began to rise in other towns and cities.

The anarchist historian Paul Avrich writes in *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* (1967):

"In a matter of weeks anarchist federations were created in Petrograd and Moscow with the aim of transforming the twin capitals into egalitarian communes modelled on an idealized vision of the Paris Commune of 1871, an event consecrated in anarchist legend"

But, as Avrich indicates, there were differences between the anarcho-communist followers of Bakunin and Kropotkin who advocated a federation of agricultural and craft-based soviets (*"to each his need"*) and the anarcho-syndicalists who pursued the idea of industrial factory committees, as well as those who pursued more individual strains of anarchism. But all the anarchists repudiated any centralized party system and the temporary government would not gain the broad support it required. While the monarchy had been overthrown the remains of the State were left standing. The anarchists were keen to see the collapse of the temporary government as well and allied themselves with the seemingly revolutionary Bolshevik movement which would prove a most costly mistake.

Vladimir Lenin had returned to Petrograd in 1917 and had also hoped to remove the temporary government but not for anarchist ideals despite the initial radical position the Bolsheviks seemed to adopt, and which had initially impressed the anarchists. Under the guise of slogans like *"all power to the soviets"* the seeds of Marxist-Leninism and State Communism were sown.



Scene from the 1917 October Revolution. Bolsheviks swept to power

The October Revolution of 1917 swept Lenin to power and his Bolshevik Revolutionary Party dominated the workers councils but not without opposition. It was soon clear to the anarchists that the Bolsheviks, once their allies, wanted absolute power and not worker control. Gregori Maximov (1893-1950) noted at the time:

"The Bolsheviks in their drive towards seizure of power and dictatorship, were forced to cast away (for the time being only, as subsequent events proved), their orthodox Marxism and to accept Anarchist slogans and methods. Alas, this was but a tactical move on their part, not a genuine change of programme. The slogans formulated by the Bolsheviks voiced, in a precise and intelligible manner, the demands of the masses in revolt, coinciding with the slogans of the Anarchists: "Down with the war," "Immediate peace without annexations or indemnities, over the heads of the governments and capitalists," "Abolition of the army," "Arming of the workers," "Immediate seizure of land by the peasants," "Seizure of factories by the workers," "A Federation of Soviets," etc. Wouldn't the realisation of these great slogans lead to the full triumph of Anarchist ideology, to the sweeping away of the basis and foundations of Marxism? Wasn't it natural for the Anarchists to be taken in by these slogans, considering that they lacked a strong organisation to carry them out independently? Consequently, they continued taking part in the joint struggle."

Nestor Makhno (1888-1934), had come from a harsh peasant background in the Ukraine and was witness to the repressive treatment of anarchists after the 1905 rising. Having become an anarchist himself in the aftermath he was later imprisoned several times but eventually released after the February Revolution of 1917. Makhno returned home but when the Bolsheviks signed the *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk* ceding large areas of the Ukraine to the Central Powers in Europe many Ukrainian peasants began a campaign of guerilla warfare. Makhno joined one of these groups and by March 1918 he had rallied the guerillas and won considerable victories against the Germans and Austrians as well as their Ukrainian Nationalist allies and the White Army regiments (a loose confederation of counter-revolutionary forces).

The *Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the Ukraine*, or the Anarchist Black Army as they were also called, from 1918-1919 attempted to create an anarchist society in the Ukraine which was administered by workers soviets and autonomous peasant councils. Makhno wrote an account of the times in the "*Russian Revolution in Ukraine 1917-1918*". Later he would write in *Delo Truda* (1925):

"Wherever human life is to be found, anarchism is alive. On the other hand, it becomes accessible to the individual only where it boasts propagandists and militants, who have honestly and entirely severed their connections with the slave

mentality of our age, something, by the way, that brings savage persecution down upon their heads. Such militants aspire to serve their beliefs unselfishly, without fear of uncovering unsuspected aspects in the course of their development, the better to digest them as they proceed, if need be, and in this way they pave the way for the success of the anarchist spirit over the spirit of submission."

Despite the often colourful presentations of the legendary Makhno he was also accused of 'ravages' by the Mennonite communities and his counterintelligence services were accused of murdering communists but how much of all this is simply pure propaganda is difficult to tell. Allegations of anti-Semitism, however, have been discounted by Paul Avrich.

Makhno's political vision was a rejection of ALL political parties including the Bolshevik dictatorship. In particular the Makhnovists rejected the 'transitional period' suggested by Marx, promoting self-managed workers councils instead. The Bolsheviks were concerned about the rise of anarchism in the Ukraine and when 40,000 Bolshevik Red Army troops defected to Makhno's Black Army, something needed to be done. By 1919 the Ukraine was slowly coming back into the hands of the Makhnovists - prisons were liberated, free speech was granted and workers councils established. Trotsky, as head of the Bolshevik Red Army, ordered an assassination but the assassins were captured and executed.

An uneasy truce was however signed between the Black and Red Armies in October 1920 as the White Army (supporters of the old Tsarist regime backed by European interests as well as those seeking a return to parliamentary democracy) advanced into Ukraine and Russia. Although Makhno stopped the White advance into Ukraine he was uncertain of his Red Army allies.



Kropotkin's Funeral Saw Huge Crowds

With the White army defeated the Bolsheviks could now reassert their power and Lenin ordered the arrest of the Black Army leaders. Although Makhno escaped the Red Army were now able to concentrate not only on the Makhnovists but against all anarchists and anyone vaguely sympathetic to them. Makhno went into exile where he helped produce the *Organizational Platform of the General Union of Anarchists* in Paris. His ideas were unpopular among other anarchists at the time but have since gained followers. Makhno died in 1934 from TB.

The fight back against the Red Army and Bolshevism continued elsewhere in Russia. An attempt at a Third Revolution was attempted by anarchists in 1918. It was the 'era of dynamite'. A peasant rebellion at Tambov arose out of disenchantment of Bolshevik redistribution of grain in 1920. but the death of Kropotkin and his funeral became the last mass gathering of anarchists until 1987.

In 1921 a rebellion was started at Kronstadt, a naval fortress in the Gulf of Finland. Although not explicitly anarchist some of its members and many of its policies followed anarchist principles. The Kronstadt sailors had been invaluable to the Revolution, winning several decisive battles but the subsequent treatment of striking workers in Petrograd by Bolshevik repression was too much and they mutinied.



Nestor Makhno and the Anarchist Black Army 1921



The attack on Kronstadt. Initial attacks are repelled

The Red Army under Trotsky sent in tens of thousands of troops against the naval fortress at Kronstadt. Initial attacks were repelled but the Bolsheviks eventually took the fortress after suffering heavy casualties and by 1922 the counter revolution had failed. Joseph Stalin was now in power and anarchists were persecuted and finally driven underground.

This is by no means a comprehensive introduction to Russian anarchism and is indeed flawed in several ways but it serves as an insight into the development of anarchist ideas, the potential revolution and subsequent crushing of the workers movement that wanted "all power to the soviets, but not the political parties".

The central theories that came out of this period are anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism. Some, such as Albert Meltzer, see the former as the end product and the latter as the method. Both are centred around the potential might of workers taking control of the means of production by seizing farms and factories and organising the workplace along self-management lines via a system of direct democracy where every worker is given a say and all appointees are instantly recallable. This is why traditional anarchists organise in the workplace supporting and agitating for industrial action and the general strike. Industrial muscle, in this context, becomes the might of the people. The general strike becomes more than a bargaining tool with authority, it becomes the method to replace that authority.

Kropotkin writing after the 1905 Revolution noted:

"The working men again threw the weight of their will into the contest and gave quite a new turn to the movement. A strike of bakers broke out at Moscow in October, and they were joined in their strike by the printers. This was not the work of any revolutionary organisation. It was entirely a working men's affair, but suddenly what was meant to be a simple manifestation of economical discontent grew up, invaded all trades, spread to St. Petersburg, then all over Russia, and took the character of such an imposing revolutionary manifestation that autocracy had to capitulate before it."

But the idea of worker control would also be central to all aspects of society. Principle among this would be the removal of capitalist economy replaced with a gift economy. All produce is there for those who have need. There would be no need to exchange money but everyone would be expected to share in the work of production. Kropotkin envisaged a working day of 3-5 hours, the rest of the time spent pursuing leisure, the sciences and the arts. He anticipated that major advances in science and culture might be made when people could devote more time to such activities and it was freed from the mantle of cost.

"We expect more from the Revolution. We see that the worker, compelled to struggle painfully for bare existence, is reduced to ignore the higher delights, the highest within

man's reach, of science, and especially of scientific discovery; of art, and especially of artistic creation. It is in order to obtain for all of us joys that are now reserved to a few; in order to give leisure and the possibility of developing everyone's intellectual capacities, that the social revolution must guarantee daily bread to all. After bread has been secured, leisure is the supreme aim."

Kropotkin went on to suggest that all forms of hierarchy were impediments to freedom whether the hierarchy was man over man or man over woman. The ideas may seem idealist at first glance but have been proven to work in the field, which is why they remain dangerous to those who seek to keep themselves in positions of wealth and power at the expense of the vast majority. Of course this is not to say that anarchist ideas are perfect. Murray Bookchin argued that anarcho-syndicalism was "archaic" and that it relied on:

"...the persistence of social forces like the factory system and the traditional class consciousness of the industrial proletariat that are waning radically in the Euro-American world in an era of indefinable social relations and ever-broadening social concerns. Broader movements and issues are now on the horizon of modern society that, while they must necessarily involve workers, require a perspective that is larger than the factory, trade union, and a proletarian orientation."

At the beginning of this article I commented on 'theory' being seen as a stumbling block. This deconstruction of early Russian anarchist theory is still pertinent however for it remains unparalleled as a body of emancipatory theory both in conceptualization and in its 'failure' as a mass movement in those times. Anarchism, too, is an ongoing project that continually must rise to meet the objects that fall in its path and current social realities need to be appreciated in context, for example the environment and concern over issues of sustainability. But as Kropotkin warns us, we are not waiting for the revolution to start - it is already happening and it could do with a few more volunteers.

It was only really in the late 1970s that anarchism began to slowly reappear in Russia. Although often dismissed in traditional anarchist circles the arrival of punk rock in the late 1970s and its tenuous association with anarchism brought a revival of interest, once again, in the idea of a free society, controlled by ordinary people. In the following interview, and the second part of this article, I tried to uncover the influence of punk and the rise of anarchism in Russia today.

Vladimir Kozlov writes in *Punk rock in a Non-Western Society* (Profane Existence 2004):

"In the last two and a half decades, the punk movement, which emerged as a Western society phenomenon, has made its way into different types of social and economic systems. In this process, the meaning and ideology of the movement have unavoidably been transformed, reinterpreted, reinvented and, often, distorted. At the same time, the observing of development and distortion of punk ideas in non-Western societies can lead to conclusions about the very nature of punk as expressed in its ability to relate to various cultural and political contexts."

Looking at the development of punk in a society that was inherently strange to this type of musical and ideological movement gives the observer a chance to better understand the ideology of punk in general, seeing it as a primarily anti-system movement, with all of its political and social affiliations depending upon the type of society in which it develops."

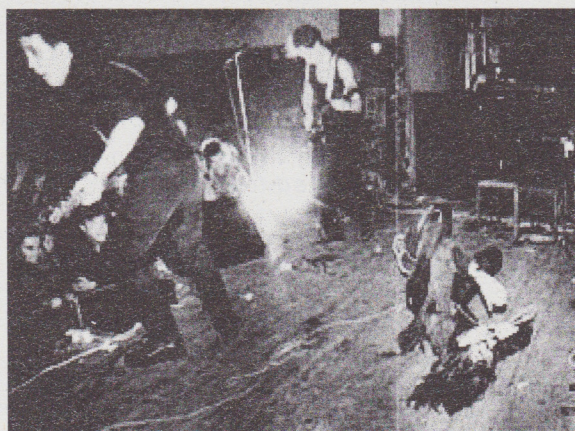
B2F: Can you give a brief history of the punk scene in Russia?

Szarapow: The whole thing started in the Soviet Union a little later than in the rest of the world, largely under the influence of the British punk explosion of the 1970s, as well as some underground art movements (necrorealism, conceptual art etc.). If we leave Estonia aside (the cultural situation differed a lot from the rest of the Soviet Union, plus there was a bit of language barrier), the earliest punk band in the USSR was **Avtomaticheskiye Udovletvoriteli** (Automatic



Andrei Panov **Avtomaticheskiye Udovletvoritel**

Satisfiers) who formed in Leningrad in 1979. They were soon followed by the likes of **Narodnoye Opolcheniye** (People's Militia), **Brigadnyy Podryad** (Brigade Contract), **Obyekt Nasmeshkek** (Object of Ridicule) and **Yugo-Zapad** (South-West) in Leningrad. One of the early new wave scenes was also happening in Moscow, with bands like **Mukhomor** (Toadstool), **Futbol** (Football), **DK**, **Tsentr** (Centre), and later and more firmly in the realm of punk rock **Chudo-Yudo**, **Va-Bank** and **Naive**. Another important early centre was Siberia, some of the 1980s bands included



Brigadnyy Podryad (Brigade Contract)

Grazhdanskaya Oborona (Civil Defence)

Grazhdanskaya Oborona (Civil Defense), **Yanka**, **Instruktsiya Po Vyzhivaniyu** (Survival Instruction), **Putti**, **Bomzh** (Bum), **Pik Klaxon**, **Chorniy Lukich**, **Kooperativ Nishtyak** (sorry, some of the names are impossible to translate). Towards the end of the 1980s some of the repression and censorship eased a little, more concerts were possible and more diverse influences available, thus some of the early 1990s bands started to incorporate hardcore elements. Also, with the breakdown of the Soviet system unofficial or commercial clubs appeared, one of the earliest and most influential

was the **TaMtAm** in St. Petersburg (1991-1996). By the mid-1990s there were several political / DIY hardcore bands in different parts of the country, such as **Skygrain**, **Wheel of Dharma**, **Otkaz Ot Nasiliya**, **Dolbi Sistemu** etc.

B2F: Does the punk scene sway more towards the anarchist, political and DIY idea or more towards street punk and nihilist fashion?

Szarapow: Actually, the street punk scene in Russia is largely political because a lot of skins and streetpunks are involved in the



antifascist movement. But that of course is just a faction of the wider punk scene in the country - there are people into pop / mainstream punk and fans of Siberian punk (a fairly different sub-subculture), there are mosh hardcore bands etc. But I'd say that the DIY underground scene grew fairly large now (only in the last ten years or so), with dozens of bands, zines and labels, and continues to grow. There are also specifically political subcultural groups e.g. **RASH** (Red & Anarchist Skinheads) or **Punk Revival** which is a country-wide anarcho-punk confederation.



DSB live in St. Petersburg, 2008

B2F: How have the authorities responded to the rise of punk?

Szarapow: Well, it depended on the context and situation. During the Soviet times punks were persecuted - imprisoned, beaten or thrown into psychiatric asylums - for anti-Soviet activities or for being anti-social types. I guess the level of tolerance for "freaks" in society, at least in the bigger cities, has grown considerably, so I guess it's mostly punks who are also members of antifascist or anarchist movements who have problems with the authorities.



St Petersburg punks at an antifascist demo, Spring 2007

B2F: Is there still a large anarchist movement in general and if so, how has it been active recently? What is the reaction of the State?

Szarapow: Still? There hasn't really been historical continuity between the anarchist movement of the early 20th century that say Paul Avrich wrote about and the present movement, not directly anyway. During the 1920s and 1930s what little anarchist infrastructure was left, and the few remaining organisations were destroyed in Russia, largely physically, and there were maybe some anarchists imprisoned in the GULAG, exiled in America or some small isolated circles until the 1980s. From the mid-eighties on there have been a variety of anarchist groups and movements in Russia. Some of the more important and currently active groups include the anarcho-syndicalist **SKT** (Siberian Confederation of Labour, an

independent trade union) and the smaller **KRAS** and **MPST**, anarcho-environmentalist movement **Rainbow Keepers**, **Anarchist Black Cross** groups (at least in Moscow and here), anarchist confederations **Avtonomnoye Deistviye** (Autonomous Action) and older yet smaller **ADA** (Association of Anarchist Movements). There are also various other sects e.g. anarcho-primitivists (whose chief activity is internet propaganda) or anarcho-capitalists (closer to libertarianism and less prominent now).

Alongside the non-aligned activists, they are involved in alternative media and animal liberation, tenants' movements and anti-military protests (the Russian army is formed with conscription), workers movements and antifascist struggle, etc. etc. This is not really a mass movement - several thousand activists in a huge country can only do so much. But the grassroots organising and horizontal structure have been quite successful - I'd say that anarchists can bring the same amount of people (or more) into the street than liberal opposition by using just word of mouth. The state reaction (as well as reaction from the business community which in many cases can directly affect the work of the state apparatus) is proportional to the threat they pose or to damage they can do. Those who get in the way can get into trouble, or killed. At the moment there are up to a dozen anarchists gaoled in

Russia, in many cases for self-defense against fascists. If you, reader, could do anything to help out, organise a benefit or solidarity event - please do.

B2F: What significant changes have there been in Russian life since the fall of the former Soviet Union? Is life less restrictive or does the Party still rule with an iron fist?

Szarapow: The economic, political and social structure of society has undergone enormous changes. On the surface, just the huge grey apartment blocks are there to remind you that yes, this consumerist country was once considered "communist." There's a lot more food and other stuff in shops, people can go overseas with relative ease, etc. But the authoritarian police state is still there, and while ostensibly Russian Federation is a democracy, the reigns are now firmly gripped by the former KGB people. They're more openly interested in their own pockets, thus the control over the economy is more crucial for them than the purely ideological instruments of the past. The concepts such as "sovereign democracy" or "vertical of power" that the current regime is using are developed, among other people, by the likes of *Alexander Dugin*, a fascist ideologue and co-founder of the National Bolshevik party (who are now a part of the wider anti-Kremlin coalition that has everyone from moderate nationalists to some social democrats). There are several parties but the United Russia (Putin's party) is the only one that's allowed to win elections. It's not as brutal as in Zimbabwe but the mechanism of interference is basically the same.

B2F: Do many punk bands tour in Russia? Is it easy or do the authorities clamp down and harass the people who are involved?

Szarapow: It depends on what you count as a punk band, but there's a fair few gigs, yes. I think the biggest punk gig I've been to has been a 1998 arena show by **The Exploited** (there were like 5000 people there, and it was stopped by the police some 40 minutes into headliners' set). The **Sex Pistols** last summer drew about half of that. But there's also a healthy stream of more underground / DIY bands coming in, the gigs I liked setting up the

most in the last few months were **DSB** from Japan and **Maika Meikers** from Estonia. There were actually fewer underground bands coming over when I lived in Sydney - but then again, St. Petersburg isn't as isolated as Australia. There weren't a lot of UK bands going this way though, I can only remember **Captain Everything!** and **Honour Among Thieves** off the top of my head. In St. Petersburg there's an average of several underground punk or hardcore gigs a month, drawing up to 300 people. Also, in the last few years, with development of local scenes, there are more possibilities to tour around Russia (not just Moscow and St. Petersburg). My favourite example here would be **Margaret Thrasher** from Irkutsk, East Siberia (not to be confused with the Canadian or English bands of the same name). They were kids between 17 and 21, and they undertook a month-long, 16-date tour all over Russia, traveling in trains and buses. It was in January, but then again, when they played here, it was -4 C in the streets and -40 C in their hometown, so they said they felt like it was a vacation for them.

B2F: Can you talk about Chechnya, and maybe some of the other breakaway states, and how Putin used Bush's war on terror to criminalize the Chechens?

Szarapow: Well, I'd never been there, it's very far, not terribly safe etc. There were some folks from Chechnya in my year in university, one of them went on to be a news anchor on the Russian state TV I think. One of the girls I'm playing in a band with has done some translating for Chechen women who had their relatives killed or "disappeared," and the stories they told were heartbreaking and violent. But anyway, after the breakup of the USSR the autonomous republic of Chechnya decided to split from Russia altogether. It was kind of tolerated for a bit, then the central government sent in the army, lost the war, signed a truce, then the second war started. What the Moscow government did then was a good example of divide and conquer, they basically put one of the local warlords (**Akhmad Kadyrov** who is now succeeded by his son **Ramzan Kadyrov**), in charge. So they maintain law and order now, and it's not so much the Russian conscripts who murder and rape the

Chechens but the Chechens themselves, except they're in Kadyrov's private army. While the armed insurgency has spread to the other regions of North Caucasus (Ingushetia and Dagestan seem to be more volatile now), Chechnya is still deadly. The murders in Moscow of journalist **Anna Politkovskaya** in 2006 and lawyer **Stanislav Markelov** (who was friends with many anarchists) in 2009 are most likely connected to their human rights activity around Chechnya, exposing the murderers and exposing the lies. Bush has got fuck all to do with the Chechen wars, maybe the mujahedeen are more keen to go to Afghanistan or Iraq now than to Chechnya. (An in-depth article on the conflict in Chechnya that my friend wrote is in the English-language zine I did a few years ago, *Blah-Blah-Blood* #2, it doesn't cover the more recent developments but it gives a good idea of the background to the conflict). As to the breaking away, I'm all in favour of Ingria breaking free from the albatross that is the rest of Russian Federation. Too many natural resources, too little brains.

B2F: Szarapow, what are you up to at the moment? Are you involved with any bands or organisations? Finally is there anything else you'd like to add?

Szarapow: I think these past few days would be a good illustration of what I'm up to. Saturday: playing a squat with the band I'm in, **Svinokop** (www.svinokop.narod.ru/svinokop.htm), Sunday morning: Skype chat re: new international anarchist newspaper for the Baltic region, Sunday night: DJ-ing at this little bar in city centre and barely making it across the bridge, Monday morning: meeting French band **Vialka** for whom I arranged a couple of gigs here at the station, walking to work, working, walking to the gig, putting Vialka on the train passing some books, zines and tapes from my distro (www.szss.tk) with them, and then getting home on the last bus, walking the Black Anti-authoritarian Dog **Makhno** (she was initially called *Masha*, long story), something along these lines though thankfully it's only seldom that my life is THIS full. Apart from the aforementioned band and distro I think I should mention that I'm occasionally publishing or editing some books



and zines, do stuff with the Anarchist Black Cross St. Petersburg (a4kpiter@gmail.com), translate or write things for *Bakunista!* (<http://bakunista.nadir.org/>) and Anarchists in the GULAG projects (<http://gulaganarchists.wordpress.com/>). If you could do stuff to help out Russian punks, anarchists and antifascists (that would permit you to feel selfless without actually leaving your safe cocoon in a liberal capitalist society) you're welcome. As Stepniak's mate Oscar Wilde said, "*A Russian who lives happily under the present system of government in Russia must either believe that man has no soul, or that, if he has, it is not worth while developing*". It's very true, I am a materialist though the happiness in my life isn't government-induced.

Resources:

Russian Anarchist Portraits:
<http://spb-anarchists.anho.org/photo-persons.htm>

SKT (Siberian Confederation of Labour) <http://skt.pp.ru/>

International Workers Association:
<http://www.aitrus.info/>

Anarchist Black Cross
<http://avtonom.org/index.php?id=555>

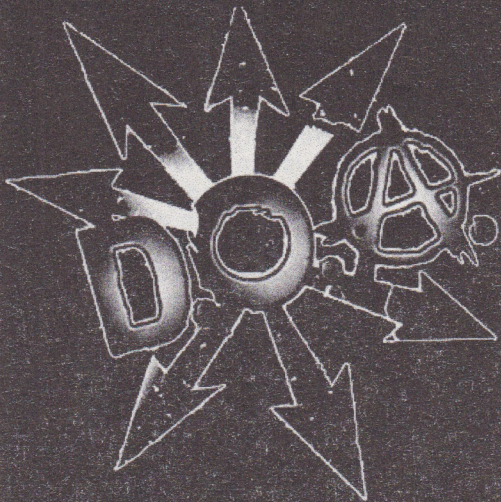
Avtonomnoye Deistviye
(Autonomous Action)
www.avtonom.org

Association of Anarchist Movements.
<http://vintovka.front.ru/>

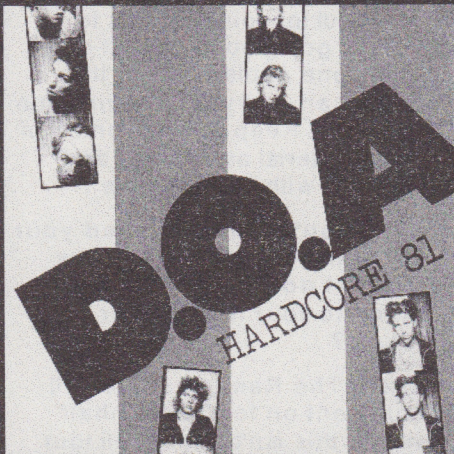
Punk in Russia
http://www.russia-ic.com/culture_art/music/557/

<http://www.vladimir-kozlov.com/Eng/Punk.html>

Anarchism under Stalin:
<http://libcom.org/history/chronology-of-russian-anarchism-1921-1953>



DOA, from Vancouver Canada, have been at the forefront of activist punk rock for three decades across North America and beyond. Joey "Shithead" Keithley has led the band from day one and remains as uncompromising now as he was then with his mantra that talk minus action = zero.



Your intrepid reporter caught up with Joey shortly after DOA returned from the last leg of their *Northern Avenger Tour* which celebrates their 30th anniversary



TALK - ACTION = ZERO

B2F: DOA have been going for thirty years now, that's some achievement, and you've a new album out called "*Northern Avenger*" on your own Sudden Death label. Tell us about the new album. You've still got that in-your-face uncompromising political touch I see.

Joey: Yeah I was pretty happy with it and the way it turned out but the idea of *Northern Avenger* is not some type of cartoon superhero type thing - it's the whole idea of that part of you trying to set things right and get people motivated to try and set things right, even if it's just giving the bad guys a hard time... so that really hasn't changed at all with our modus operandi (laughs), so yeah I think it's best album we've done in years - I know every band says that every time they bring out a new album - but in this case I mean it, we produced it with an old friend of ours and he's got a great ear for music.

B2F: Going right back to the early days, tell us about the early scene around the *Smiling Buddha* and the development of the Canadian scene. Things were a lot different in the days before computers and cell phones. DOA were really important along with DKs and Black Flag in trailblazing across North America introducing punk to the masses but in your case you also took the political side especially around 79/80 when Reagan was in power in the US and Clark and Pierre Trudeau in Canada.

Joey: When we started out the original punk rock was inspired by what was going on in London and what was going on in New York but within a couple of years of playing around, starting out at the Buddha, we started venturing down to California and, you're right, communication was totally different - we would try to figure out how to get a gig going by going to a record store where we'd get a magazine with addresses of promoters and stuff but we couldn't afford the magazine so we just copied the addresses and phone numbers and call people or send letters with a single in the mail and say -we're DOA from Canada, book us- type of thing, right? Give us \$100. It was great then and within a couple of years a whole

kind of circuit, so to speak, had evolved between Vancouver, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego with a whole lot of great bands like **Black Flag, Dead Kennedys, Circle Jerks, the Avengers, The Dills** and tons of others and that circuit had its own unique sound. By about 1981 people started calling it hardcore punk but at the same time, you're right, there was also a major influence on punk rock in America and Canada with Ronald Reagan becoming president in 1980. Reagan was the salvation of the Republican Party - we played a show in Detroit and this massive riot ensued between anti-Reagan and Pro-Reagan factions - 5000 people fighting it out and 300 cops trying to break it up and we're on stage playing "*Fucked Up Ronnie*"...

B2F: A fine moment...

Joey: (laughs)... but yeah back in the day a lot of venues and places to play weren't there and it was really DOA and Black Flag playing a lot of towns and places where no punk bands had played before - I mean of course there was punk rock in all the bigger cities but there was lots of places where people had never heard this kind of stuff - it was like - shock!!! They'd call the cops and try to get us arrested but you know the scene really started growing from there. It was either us or Black Flag and we became friends and we'd ask each other - well have you been to this town yet - and we'd exchange contacts so we were trailblazing so to speak.

B2F: How do you feel about the term hardcore and your association as founders of that genre or was the name already going about?

Joey: In a sense it was us. The way it came about was there was this writer who wrote an article and I can't remember his name or the magazine, but he wrote in 1980 there was a new type of music out that's called hardcore and named all the bands and we were just about to record our 2nd LP - our manager said that's a great term, we should use it on the album - so we did and put out the album "*Hardcore 81*" (a classic - Ed) and then we had this festival, 2 night sort of thing in Vancouver. **Black Flag, 7 Seconds** and a lot of Vancouver bands - that



SOMETHING BETTER CHANGE

was the first time the term had been used in public, right, and just after we put out the album and did a 45 city US tour North America on the *Hardcore 81 Tour* and what that did was put it into the common vernacular. Since then it's really spread, I mean people are using it for everything now... but you wouldn't say in a sense that we were progenitors of the term hardcore, we didn't make it up but we popularized it in a lot of ways.

B2F: I suppose you get asked this a lot but what do you think of being the only original in the band, does it even matter at the end of the day? I see Randy was back in the band again recently. How do your solo albums differ from when you're doing a DOA album?

Joey: The solo albums? The first one "Beat Trash" was mostly acoustic with my take on Woody Guthrie and stuff like that - political folk music with a bit of rock with keyboards and horns - on that album I purposely tried NOT to make it sound like a DOA record, or otherwise it would have been just another DOA record.

As far as being the only original... I think the thing is when you play live or record you're trying to do something that's gonna be good; trying the best that you can, so this idea of

different people in the band is really good - the band right now are really good and we have a fun time travelling together - we've been to China and Europe and it worked and I think if you can convince people that you're good then it speaks for itself - people will let you know otherwise (laughs) - music is like that. It can turn into what I call box-office poison. Of course some of the old hands say it would be great to have the original line-up back together but we tried that a few years ago and it didn't work. They're all good guys, right, and we're all still friends.... when we started we were all teenagers and now we're all middle-aged (laughs)... you know what's important in life!

B2F: You reformed Sudden Death Records a few years back - was it good to be back in control. You've worked with a few bigger labels along the way. What would you say to up and coming bands about taking the DiY route compared to signing to a label?

Joey: I think it worked pretty well that we could totally control how things went out and of course there were difficulties with the amount of work involved - what is there to running a record label? How hard can it be? I kinda laugh - sadly I found out the hard way - there's a lot of work but I'm a hard-working guy and I enjoy doing it. We've had pretty good success with the label and we've had failure. I usually go on record and say, if I like the feel of a new band or the passion, then that's what I look for and sometimes get a real gem that shines through.

B2F: Cool - so what advice would you give to new bands? Would you advise them for example to stick with the DiY idea of doing things?

Joey: It's a funny thing, I think there's advantages to both doing it yourself and being on another label but what I would say is don't worry about the trends in music - do what you want to do and do it as well as you can and be original, right? So many things in music get shaken around like putting a fresh coat of paint on an old body of a car - all we're doing now is recycling old rock 'n' roll, blue and country with the volume turned up. So

it's that and... I think the other thing is it's good to do the DiY thing - you record some stuff and put it up on MySpace and start to travel around but the one thing I'd add that gets me about that though is that one time bands will record and they think they're ready to do an album - the difference is the old bands or some of the better bands today, they probably have gone and played those songs live a lot. With our first album we'd already played 300-400 shows and we'd probably played those songs about a 1000 times so that's why you end up with a decent record. It makes a difference if you take time - don't get me wrong I'm not knocking people who record stuff at home.

If you do deal with a record company, read the contract and don't get trapped into something you won't like later. There's a problem when you get to the bigger labels - you have to have an awful lot going for you to keep it going your way. It only takes one apple to fall of the apple cart and you're driving into the ditch. Keep artistic control of your material at all costs and network with other people.

B2F: You've just finished your 30th anniversary tour - how did that go and are there any plans to tour in the near future?

Joey: The Ramones farewell tour went on for 3 and a half years, this isn't a farewell tour don't get me wrong - it's an ongoing 30th anniversary tour because we don't travel for like 100 shows in a row so this is kinda spread out over 2 years but so far it's going good. China was extraordinary... the weirdest place I've ever been in my life...

B2F: Did you get followed by the authorities?

Joey: No not really - we flew out under the radar so to speak. They do take issue with certain things. If you're over there and you go certain websites, for example, there's people watching you online... but anyway some of the bands over there are really good even though I couldn't understand the lyrics so I asked and there's a lot of self-expression about what's going on. When you have a repressive society like that you can't say outright that there's no

equivalent to a "Fucked Up Ronnie" type thing, right, you know like "Fucked Up Wen Jiabao" or stuff like that but artists always find a way to express themselves and you know what they mean even if they don't say it directly.

B2F: Your grandfather came from Keighley in Yorkshire. West Yorkshire is one place in the UK where there has been a rise in far right activity. What is the state of the far right in Canada today? Are these guys active on any significant level and is there much of an anti-fascist response?

Joey: You know what, it's pretty minimal. The most they do would be like deface a synagogue or a Jewish cemetery or something like that - and it does happen once in a while - but Canada's mostly a mild sort of place in that respect and people generally get along. You don't have that sort of thing, I mean they're there but they haven't really done a lot lately, put it that way.

B2F: So they don't really have a political front either?

Joey: Yeah, they're not running candidates like the BNP so there's no equivalent to that. The laws here are such that if you openly discriminate or if you had a political party that said they didn't like a group of people because of XYZ, they'd be quickly pursued by human rights groups and brought to book. In a sense there is a control of freedom but there is stuff in place to stop it.

B2F: You wrote your autobiography "*I, Shithead: A Life in Punk*" recently which came out in 2004. I was amazed at some of the attention to detail - did you keep a diary or was all that beer really good for the memory after all?

Joey: It wasn't too bad, right (laughs). We used to do our tour schedules so for all those old stories (in the book) we had old posters and flyers so I meticulously went through that and got the facts straight - and what really made it easy was to write in a linear fashion rather than jumping about from story to

story. It's a chronological look at the first 12 years of DOA. I mean we also ended up driving in a van like forever so we always had a few beers and told stories to our mates even if they'd heard them 5 or 6 times already right, so some of those stories become pretty engrained so I think the book is pretty accurate.

B2F: And are you planning to continue it or get into writing other books?

Joey: I do have some other ideas, not a rehash of the same thing - more political punk type stuff and I suppose it'll happen when it happens.

B2F: A lot of the old anarchist groups in Europe ended up starting off the Green movement in Europe. You have run for the Green Party on two occasions that I know about - in 1996 and in 2001 when you did particularly well - are you planning to run again. How does this stand with your anarchist politics?

Joey: Yeah I ran for them in 1996 provincially (state-level wise) and also in 2001. In 1997 I also ran for the city council - basically I thought that it was a good way to draw attention to issues like trying to preserve what's left of the earth. I'd been a member of the party but after we lost the 2001 election I didn't renew my card - I thought there was better ways in the end. I could do more by saying what I thought myself and by talking to people and playing my guitar. Frankly I'm glad I didn't get elected - from my limited experience of meeting politicians in 3 different elections they're a pretty ghastly bunch!

B2F: Are you involved with any activist/anarchist groups locally?

Joey: The most recent activist stuff we've done is anti-war stuff and against free-trade neoliberals - we prefer fair trade as opposed to people with a lot of money getting even more - as well as lots of environmental issues and stuff. I'm not in any organisation at present - I've got my own organisation - DOA!

B2F: Anarchism, according to some, has never been especially big in Canada but I hear there are groups in Halifax, Fredericton, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Calgary, Edmonton, Vancouver and Victoria. Is it that big?

Joey: Yes and no. I think that peoples understanding of it hasn't really clarified over the years so there's still a general understanding that it means chaos. There's still all these chaos punk bands that use the anarchists symbol but know very little about it type thing. It's just something they saw on a Rancid record or something. But the knowledge is there cos we have anarchists like Noam Chomsky who help these ideas to spread and get people thinking. Another thing that HAS caught on here is atheism. It's bigger than the anarchist movement and it's a got a more direct goal. A lot of that has to do with George Bush and the born-again Christian thing trying to change all these laws but there's a lot of stuff going on - a woman's right to choose, stopping the church becoming the state, religion used in courts etc so the atheist thing is really starting to take off!

B2F: That's cool. You've done at least one Bob Dylan cover in the past. Dylan once wrote that he stopped doing overtly political songs because he felt it snapped peoples will to do something active because they just listened to the song



and said 'yeah, I identify with that'. Do you think politically charged music does have an effect?

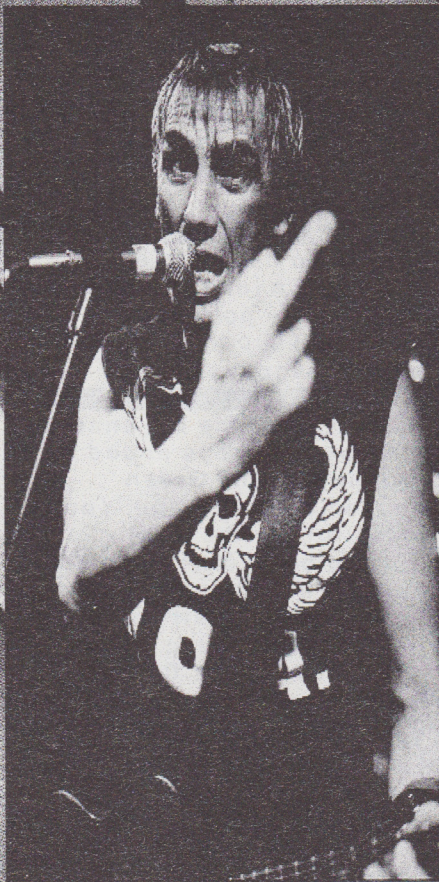
Joey: It does... I mean you're saying that some people think 'that's enough' but on the other hand if Dylan hadn't wrote "Blowin' in the Wind" or "Masters of War" or stuff like that which went a long way towards what you might call people power - I mean people realize they're a lot stronger together. If you think of the Warsaw Pact and the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania who got out of Soviet subservience or the time when the Yugoslavian mass protests got rid of Slobodan Milošević, or the more obvious example (in terms of the question) of people in the US who were inspired by Dylan or Phil Ochs to stop the Viet Nam war. People were inspired by those lyrics and who am I to argue with Bob Dylan, one of the greatest protest writers of the last century.

B2F: What's the Canadian punk scene like these days - we get to hear of the bigger names like DOA, Subhumans, Propagandhi and the like but what other good bands should we be checking out?

Joey: One band that's making waves are called **Fucked Up** from Toronto. Put it this way there's a lot of active, political, DiY anarchist punk going on in Canada - it's not huge but it's pretty big. There's mainstream stuff too, what I call 'MALL PUNK' and all that MTV crap but there is a real underground political punk scene that causes a lot of trouble, organizes protests and stuff like that over issues that need to be fought; organising benefits to help people out etc There's a lot of new zines coming out of the suburbs too, like young people 15-20 years old just getting into it - there's some good stuff and some atrocious stuff but hey, that's the way it goes!

B2F: How has global warming impacted upon you? Is climate change a big issue for you in Canada? How this impact on

the band/label e.g. using recycled card packaging digipacs instead of plastic, touring less, using more eco-friendly ways of touring, flying less etc...



Joey: It's a huge issue in Canada but of course it's shunted to one side over the whole economic thing. Until the last few years it was always getting swept back to page 10 of the news but there's been a big activist community developing throughout Canada pushing for it. As far as the label goes I find it pretty difficult - there's far less CDs being pressed but when you look at the packaging it puts the cost up 2 and a half times. If you know of anything cheaper please get in touch. As far as touring and flying goes, you know what I'd say I'm probably flying more now and if I'm not flying I'm driving so we use a lot of fuel on every road. It's a difficult subject but anything we

but anything we can do in other ways like reducing the endless amounts of packaging and waste that's gonna end up in a landfill site is a good thing to do. With DOA I guess the main thing we do on tour is the tour bus is powered by propane which is a cleaner and cheaper fuel so it's dual purpose but we don't like to spend money we don't have, right?

B2F: Finally Joe, what's been the biggest highlight for you in DOA over the last 30 years?

Joey: The biggest headache? Oh highlight (laughs). That's a tough one - the main thing after all these years is that I'm gratified that people still appreciate DOA and that we're still able to help people along the way but when people say hey, you helped get my head on straight type of thing, I probably appreciate that more than anything else.

B2F: Thanks Joey, good luck with the tour and all the best with the next 30 years!



Joey: I don't know about that (Laughs)

www.suddendeath.com

www.myspace.com/doapunk

NORTHERN AVENGER

WE DON'T FORGET

DECEMBER

08TH

FOR ALEXIS*

all these people
starches killed

WE NEVER FORGIVE!

*ALEXANDROS GRIGORPOULOS RIP

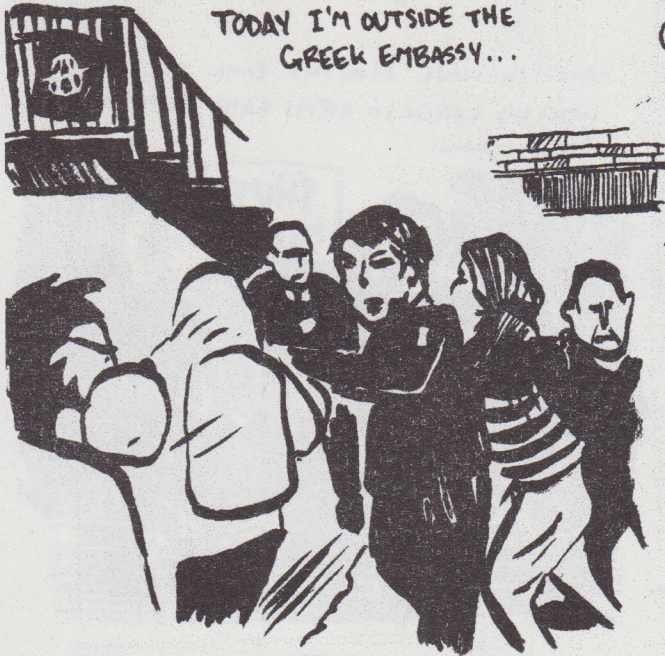
ON SATURDAY A 16 YEAR OLD KID WAS
SHOT & KILLED BY A COP IN ATHENS...



MURDERED IN THE STREET BY
SOME PRICK IN A UNIFORM



TODAY I'M OUTSIDE THE
GREEK EMBASSY...



WATCHING FRIENDS
(COMRADES?) ~~AND~~ BURN & DESTROY THE
GREEK FLAG ON THE EMBASSY'S BALCONY



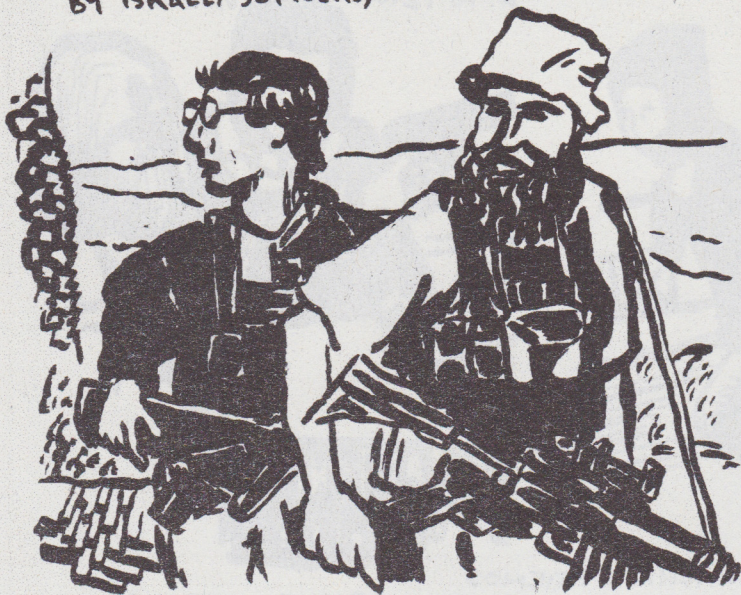
YESTERDAY I WATCHED
WALTZ WITH BASHIR



AN ISRAELI FILM ABOUT THE
MASSACRES IN SABRA & SHAILA IN 1982



FOUR DAYS AGO TWO PALESTINIANS WERE SHOT,
BY ISRAELI SETTLERS, WHILST FARMING THEIR LAND

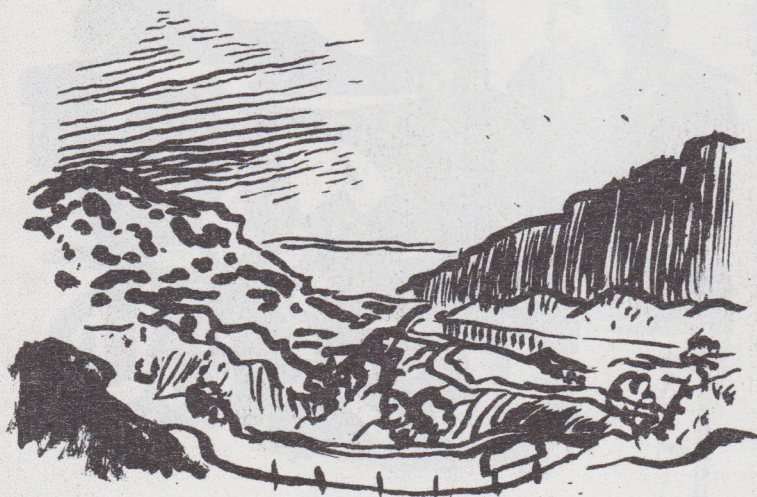


ALL SHOT BY YOUNG IDIOTS
CARRYING WEAPONS THEY HAVE NO RIGHT
TO BE USING...

FILE



THEN WE STILL HAVE UN-MANNED DRONES
• KILLING IN AFGHANISTAN



AND IN NINE MONTHS TIME THE
WORLD'S LARGEST ARMS FAIR RETURNS
TO LONDON



I'M GLAD I WAS THERE TO SHOW SOLIDARITY
WITH ALEXIS (&
ALL THOSE RESISTING IN GREECE)



BUT... I CAN'T HELP
THINKING THAT IT'S NOT ENOUGH
IN THIS FUCKED UP WORLD!!



"REMEMBER THAT IT IS ALWAYS AUTHORITY KILLING THE PEOPLE, IT IS ALWAYS THE POWERFUL KILLING THE POWERLESS."

-A GRANDFATHER OVERHEARD AT A MEMORIAL TO ALEXANDROS, EXPLAINS THE EVENTS TO HIS GRANDSON

BOILING POINT

Pick a point in history. At the end of 2008 in Greece people are on the streets shocked and horrified at the death of *Alexandros Grigoropoulos* at the hands of the cops, specifically *Epaminondas Korkoneas* who pulled the trigger. Riots ensued for weeks. Alexi's death was the straw that broke the camel's back as unrest grew in response to economic recession in Greece and the corruption inherent within it. It's only one point in history but it's a reminder.

By the 'end' of the Greek insurrection in early 2009 many buildings, banks and other symbols of capitalism were destroyed but the dust has yet to settle and that story is not over.

In France unrest was also ongoing in early 2009 leading to a general strike against government handling of the current economic decline and by March workers had resorted to kidnapping their bosses in the face of job losses while by July they were threatening to blow up their factories if concerns were not met. Trust the French to lead the way in insurrectionary ideas!

There were ongoing food riots during this time from Indonesia to Mexico and from Haiti to Egypt (where the cost of food has doubled) as people fought back due to the slump in commodity prices while Biotech companies rushed onto the scene to offer their genetically modified crap to help 'save the world' and secure their profit margins. The Food Riots which originally began back in 2007 are a nagging reminder that it is always the poorest who get hit first and get hit hardest as the world sinks into recession.

In November 2008, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization reported that food prices had suffered 18% inflation in China, 13% in Indonesia and Pakistan, and at least 10% in Latin America, Russia and India. There was a doubling in the price of wheat, a 20% increase in the price of rice, and a 50% increase on maize creating further uncertainty.

The US and the EU are meanwhile shifting crops into bio-fuel technology, itself an ecological timebomb. This, in addition to 'encouraging' developing countries to not merely 'liberalize' their agricultural sectors (for free market corporate entry of course), but to specialize in exporting specific cash crops (cotton, cocoa), has done wonders to precipitate food scarcity. Over-consumption in the West and in rapidly developing economies such as China and India, added to the mutability of climate change,

dwindling unpolluted aquifers, and rising fertilizer costs, are other reasons. Meanwhile flooding the markets with cheap credit while at the same time pumping trillions into futile wars adds fuel to the fire.

Political stability is being undermined in response. Food shortages are proving endemic. Riots have been sparked in Cameroon, Egypt, Burkina Faso, Uzbekistan and Yemen. There have been riots over spiraling grain prices in Mauritania and Senegal. In Mexico City, mass protests were sparked by a price hike in tortillas. In Haiti, biscuits are being made from a mud compound. But food scarcity was not the only cause of tension as the world markets crashed.

By April 2009 riots were ablaze in Chisinau, capital of Moldova over the fraudulent electoral process which saw the PCRM Communist Party back in power. In July



2009 in Ürümqi, North Western China, thousands clashed with riot police over ongoing Party repression. Within days the 'official' death toll was 197 dead, 1721 injured. In Iran September 2009 thousands rioted in defiance of a totalitarian state. These are snapshots, points in history, reminders of people fighting back.

With at least 4 of the top US banks losing half of their assets as recession took a grip the economist Barry Ritholtz, stated that the bailout plan promoted by former US Secretary of the Treasury Henry Paulson amounts to a sum of money that "is superior to the Louisiana Purchase, the New Deal, the Marshall Plan, the Apollo Lunar Project, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the invasion of Iraq and other large government expenditures - combined". While one billion people face starvation and dispossession \$1.2 trillion was poured into US banks as leaders continued to make sure poverty is an ongoing part of history.

Founder of the Trilateral Commission Zbigniew Brzezinski explains that America is "going to have millions and millions of unemployed (currently over 10% - Ed), people really facing dire straits. And we're going to be having that for some period of time before things hopefully improve. And at the same time there is public awareness of this extraordinary wealth that was transferred to a few individuals at levels without historical precedent in America..." Brzezinski concludes with this noteworthy remark "...hell, there could be even riots".

Meanwhile in the UK cops predicated a 'summer of rage' against the economic downturn. 2009 began with protests against the US/UK backed Israeli attack on Gaza. There were solidarity marches in support of Greek anarchists but the police were eyeing the G20 protests scheduled for April as the starting point. Meanwhile EU member states were intensively monitoring potential unrest across Europe after civil unrest in Greece, as well as Iceland, Latvia and Lithuania. 'Intensive sharing of information' between states is thought to be ongoing.

The G20 meet in London was greeted by mass protests following the cops pumping the media with scare stories and hyped-up propaganda, as if anarchists were set to tear the very framework of society apart (if only). On the actual day the Met's policy of *kettling* and general abusive behaviour led to the death of Ian Tomlinson, an innocent bystander. Various other assaults by police were videoed and posted online so for once despite the usual 'violence' by anarchists who 'ruined it all' for the 'largely peaceful demonstration' highlighted by the media it was the cops who lost the day being exposed as the henchmen of capitalism who will lash out and kill to protect and uphold the law; that is to say to uphold capitalism and protect its property at all costs. It's a reminder that opposition is confined to tokenism; it's a reminder of all those who have died at the hands of the state - Carlo Giuliani in Genoa in 2001 or even Sacco & Vanzetti 80 years before. Countless others.

In September at the G20 meeting in Pittsburgh USA thousands clashed with the cops who were keen to unveil their new weapon - after 'successful experiments' in Iraq - a kind of sound cannon which creates a loud shrill noise (Long Range Acoustic Devices have been sold to China and other 'allies'), which led to 'coughing' and 'eye and ear problems' including 'ruptured eardrums' among protesters although the New York Times was keen to point out that "There were no serious injuries".

In October tens of thousands of Italians protested at the ongoing corruption of Silvio Berlusconi. But the whole world is at protest. We can look at points in history in isolation and comment on the socio-economic reasons that lead to protest in these places but these snapshots are all from the last 12 months alone! When we look at it like this we begin to see the actual fight back on a global scale. But while we might recoil at the heavy handed tactics of the state (as if to somehow imagine we actually expected less) we might also remember those who have fallen struggling for a better world and while we remember their names we must also recall the extents to which more brutal regimes will go, such as China during the Ürümqi riots mentioned earlier which saw 200 dead or in Guinea in September 2009, to offer further example, where at least 100 lay dead after the military, many of whom were said to be drunk, opened fire on pro-democracy demonstrators.

On the face of it we know why people protest but what are they hoping to achieve beyond some vague redress to what they perceive as injustice? Why is the masked rioter in Pittsburgh throwing rocks at

the cops and why is the young mother in Haiti rioting? Do they care if there is a strategy in their actions? They want an end to tyranny. Some will argue that action without theory is as impotent as theory without action and berate such activities as a result but anger is spontaneous and when banks and corporate stores are sacked isn't the outrage in the message obvious? Some just want to fight the cops, to engage the State's bogeymen to remind them of their anger and disgust even when they know at the back of their minds their actions will achieve nothing but injuries, arrest and bad propaganda with the police calling on parliament to give them more powers. Others need to know that there are clear objectives in their actions to target specific grievances and get a result. Others again prefer that no force is used. The variance of ideas, of theory and action is also a reminder of our own diversity and while we seek a new world in our hearts it is worth considering that opening divisions within protest by creating artificial intellectual constraints can also be detrimental.

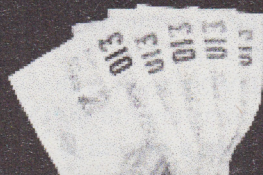
We are everywhere and we are fighting back but often only when trouble is on our own doorstep. We are often placated by improvements in wages or work conditions; reforms in unjust laws and taxes or a change of face in government. The electoral process allows us to change the administrators but never are we given a say in the actual system that continues to fail and betray the vast majority. It is commandingly obvious that reforming the congenital failure that is capitalism is not only a smokescreen but a practicable impossibility. We all know what is possible if 'cost' is taken out of the picture. It is physically possible to feed and house the world but only when 'cost' is removed from the equation so why do we allow a tiny majority to keep fumbling along, pretending to dress up the lie while destruction and corruption, death and disease, environmental and climate instability ensue?

Part of the reason is that we've let ourselves become so dependent on the State for food, electricity, transport etc forgetting our own capabilities. Imagine you and I are insulted on a daily basis as decisions which affect us, often more than we realise, are made by people without our consultation as if we lacked the intelligence or the will to deal with them. This goes to the heart of the DIY ethic, learning to do things ourselves, learning to take part in the decisions that affect us and taking the reins from capitalism and putting them into the hands of workers at a local level.

It is workers who create everything by ingenuity and by their labour after all. It is not capitalism nor state communism but workers who supply all our needs and that is why workers should make decisions that affect them by direct democracy. It is essentially the creation of autonomous, non-hierarchical groups in which all have a say and from which all appointed delegates are instantly recallable that creates a benchmark for new politics. The San Justo glassworks in Buenos Aires is one of over 250 'recovered businesses' controlled by workers co-operatives since the IMF-backed economic collapse in Argentina in 2001.

There are many ways to fight back but ultimately the aim of the fight back remains uncertain of itself, often satisfied by immediate demands. This may even be the goal of a specific action which is fine but ultimately the collective fight back might need to look further ahead into the long term. We win victories like the 8 hour day (what about the 4 hour working day next?) and other social reforms and rights that we have fought for but capitalism continues to create the problems in the first place and that is where our collective future must lie. This isn't a platform, it's an observation of the long battle ahead.





THE PRICE IS RIGHT

or How to Buy Revolutionary Chic

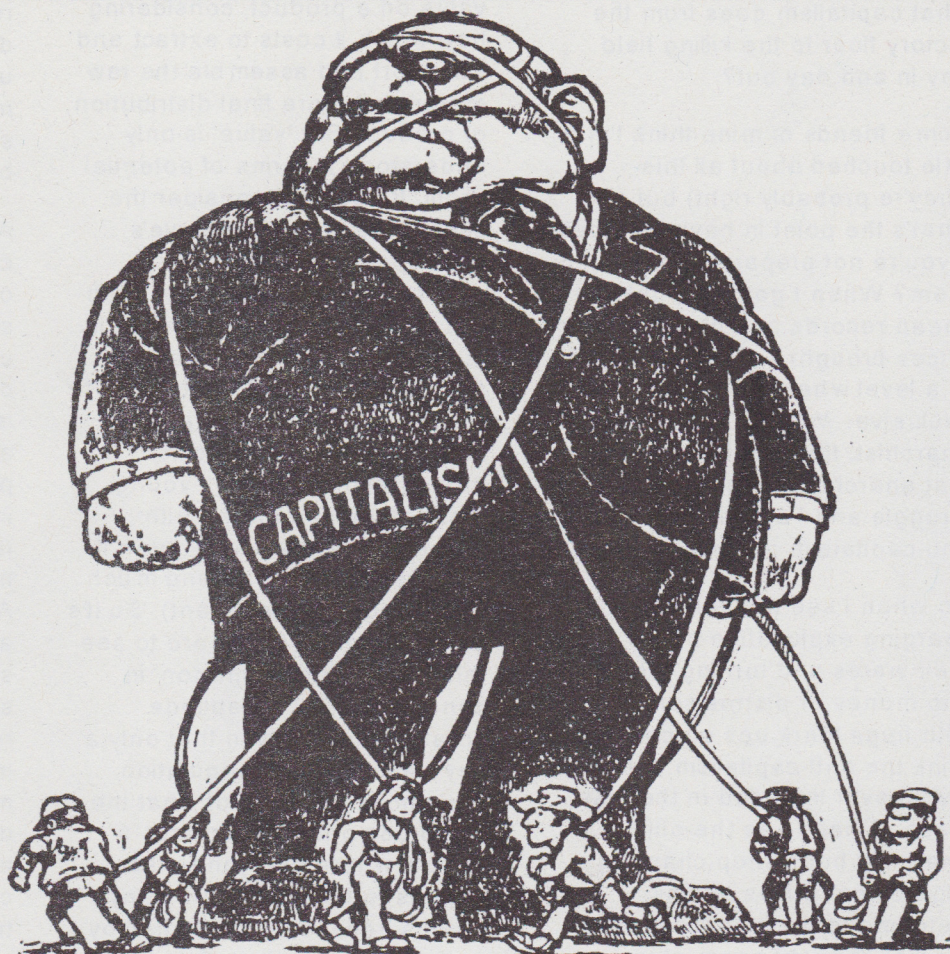
*"There's always a penny in
the music we make"*

(The Levellers)

How much does something really cost? How much is an hour of your time actually worth? Why does a new car lose one quarter of its value the day after you've bought it? Why is it necessary for a peasant in South America or China to get less than a dollar a day while a CEO in London or New York gets millions (plus bonuses) in order to maintain an economy that perhaps only 5% of the world's population actually benefits from? This is the problem of 'value' in capitalism and is central to the resulting exploitation that ensues.

When I first started publishing zines back in the mid-80's it was because it was something I thought I could do. I mean you don't know what you can and can't do until you try, right? From the first I also decided that the zine would be sold at cost price. I was inspired by the DiY ethic you see, particularly the anti-capitalist idea of minimising the amount of capital involved in producing a product. Of course you had to pay for it initially, and it's not as if I was 'beyond the system' or any such contrivance, though the zine could also be used as a form of currency for trading with other likeminded souls across the world.

I took the DiY philosophy and the *pay no more than* labels to mean, that although you were trying to distance yourself from the exploitation of profit, that you were also trying to say something i.e. that the ideas were more important than the economics and that achievement didn't have to be measured by monetary gain. And of course even if I had gone the way of the price tag who on earth would want to buy a badly printed zine



with naive political outbursts and little else besides anyway?

Ideally I'd prefer to give the zines away for free as would be envisaged in an anarchist society but until such times you have to use what's at your disposal and minimize your exposure to anything you'd rather avoid in the first place, namely capitalism. But therein lies another conundrum - what if you want to make a living out of what you create? Well, it's only a conundrum insofar as you can still have the above philosophy but draw a line when you become comparable to the market. What I mean is that if you sell your wares at High Street prices then you accept the capitalist value of your product, that is to say you accept the economic philosophy of the market and, indirectly, all the countless exploitation that goes

with it and in that instance you negate any possible notion that you are in any way whatsoever anti-capitalist. Therefore it's all down to where you draw the line with mark-ups. Of course if you are raising funds for a benefit that's a different matter, but only to a degree.

So when I look at the wider DiY, punk and anarchist circles that I move in I see all sorts of variations in what has been discussed above. There are those trying to minimize their association with capitalism and those who make a living without taking the piss and those who are quite happy to take the money and run. I can't see how anyone can call themselves anti-capitalist while they're in the latter bracket. Where's the philosophy, where's the example; where's the attempt to minimize profit as 'value'? If you

believe in a society where people, animals and the environment are not exploited then you would think you'd find ways of destroying, or at least avoiding, a system that does? Need we remind ourselves of what capitalism does from the factory floor to the killing field day in and day out?

Some friends of mine think I'm a little touched about all this (they're probably right) but what's the point in having values if you're not prepared to stand by them? When I got into punk the cheap records and cheap door prices brought everything down to a level where it wasn't exclusive. When I became an anarchist, that is when I realised that anarchism was about class struggle and I appreciated what anti-capitalism really meant.

So when I see these bands charging exploitative prices for their wares and turning rebellion into money or distros selling stuff with huge mark ups on cost, I think the anti-capitalism is lost, if it was ever intended in the first place. When I see the online anarchist book shop charging High Street prices, I think welcome to the globalised free market. It might seem obvious on the face of it but where's the difference, where's the alternative when embracing market value is accepting the exploitation and exclusivity of capitalism, no more and no less?

Others have said to me that small scale operations have to charge more because they create smaller amounts of units and therefore their overheads are higher but the same principles apply. If your product which purports to be anti-capitalist in nature costs less than £1 to create does it follow you should charge £5 or £10 for it? I mean if you are only making 100 units for example, why charge much more than cost, it's not as if you stand to make very much anyway? It's important not to lose sight of the argument here - I am talking exclusively about products which advertise themselves as anti-capitalist; that present a social message in

which capitalism has no place.

Bizarrely some people don't think they're getting 'value' unless they pay a suitably high fee to justify the concept. Capitalism works by placing value on a product, considering how much it costs to extract and transport and assemble the raw materials before final distribution of product. But 'value' is only understood in terms of potential profit. It does not consider the cost of the hours of people's lives spent at work or the environmental costs associated. But capitalism adds value too in terms of what is fashionable or culturally approved. In terms of a band for example, popularity (through targeting specific demographics such as young teenage girls) equates with further monetary 'value' even if there is artistic merit (and much to its long-term detriment). So it's ok to charge £75 or more to see this 'cultural phenomenon' in concert then? This attitude creates exclusivity in that only a tiny fraction of the population can afford the 'best' of what the world can offer and creates a culture where everyone else aspires to be like them by any means necessary (and often by anti-social activities). Then there's the mythology of the of the hard-to-find product with collectors paying many times the value of something just so they can have it, adding further 'value' out of thin air.

Capitalism also responds by creating cheaper variations for us mere mortals like, for example, the DVD player with cheap plastic components that is designed to break a few days after its 12 month guarantee runs out. And of course, by demanding our supplying with utter crap that we have no actual need of in the first place, the sustainability of our future has become uncertain.

As a social movement anti-capitalism becomes an oxymoron when it exists side by side with market economy and unless it finds ways to at least distance itself from that market it is tantamount to farce. There are systems such as participatory economics which improve the overall system in favour of the worker and yet do not challenge capitalism per se. And it's easy to brush off the argument by arguing that such a system is reformist, indeed saying the same of price restriction but such a stance merely justifies the current model. This is just my opinion so don't write in with a Marxist analyses of economics by scale; commerce is the antithesis of true creativity.

Others have a different take on all this and it will no doubt cause controversy but it's not about moral high ground, it's about using art as anti-capitalism not selling anti-capitalism as art.





The much respected Citizen Fish, purveyors of finest quality anarcho-ska-punk-whatever since 1989 made a welcome return to Belfast in 2009. I've seen them a number of times though the last occasion was in the old Warzone Centre back in the early 90's. Noted for catchy tunes and meaningful lyrics they are one of few anarcho-bands to survive the 80s and 90s and are still inspiring today. Your intrepid reporter caught up with singer Lucas backstage before the gig.

B2F: You're on tour again and you've just released a new DVD called "*Overwater Underground*". Can you tell us about that?

Dick: Yes, you could almost call it, ah... I forget the title... (remembers) "*Gaffer Tape 2*" - it's much the same way of doing it - Jasper gets out his camcorder and films things when we're on tour or gets people to say things to the camera, captures us in gigs, on stage/off-stage, at home - that sort of thing - then compiles it all together so it's pretty loose but vaguely chronological, and it covers the last 5-6 years with bits of live tracks filmed by other

people shoved in at the end as well as a radio interview with a picture of a transistor radio for effect! Yeah it's pretty much Jasper's style and if you like that it's very good.

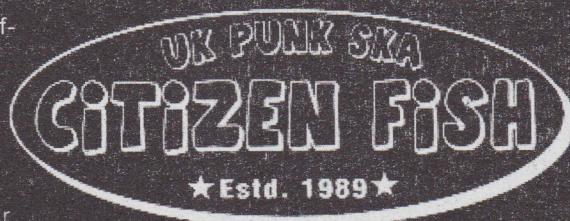
B2F: And I notice the DVD has been released by PM Press...

Dick: Yes, PM Press was started by Ramsay Kanaan who founded and used to run AK Press and, apparently, the anarchist way of them organising it as a collective... well, it got to the point where Ramsey's ideas weren't appealing to the rest of the collective so they more or less threw him out of the thing that he'd started right down to the letter of the idea, so he started again with PM Press!

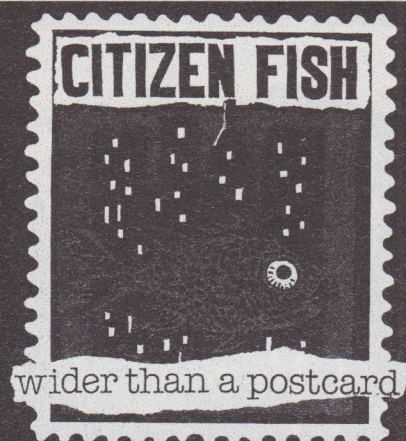
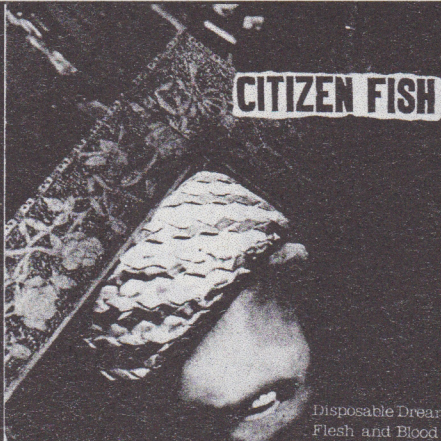
B2F: Interesting... so you (Citizen Fish) were off the screen for a few years there until the split album with Leftover Crack. How did that come together and what where you up to in between?

Dick: Well we did more Subhumans than Fish gigs partly

because Subhumans get invited to do more gigs, that's the main reason I suppose - bound to be. We were getting a few new songs together but, actually... only about one - it was very slow and we weren't even practicing much or had the chance to... Subhumans and Citizen Fish had both played with Leftover Crack and Sturgeon, the singer, is a big time fan of Citizen Fish because we were the first band he saw apparently, at Gilman Street, Berkeley years ago and that got him right into the whole punk rock thing. So the gigs we did together were very good and they were a really whacky bunch but dead interesting to be with and they said (do) we want to do a split single/album with them and are we up for it... but we had to record it all in August and try to get it all done in time for another tour we did in September. This was in like June, so it really gave us a deadline and kicked us up the ass so over the course of about 4 days of continual practicing and writing and getting down to it, we invented about 4-5 tunes and then went along with their idea of doing cover versions of each other's bands which is a new thing to do, and for once had us playing to that Crass-like beat on that "Clear Channel Fuck Off" track - I mean we've never done anything that sounded just like Crass - it's so



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much fun singing along to that... so a kick up the ass was probably what we needed.

B2F: Hence the name "Deadline" I suppose...

Dick: It kind of fits in - we were arguing over emails as to the title and the pitch of the front cover and stuff and I'd done this painting and the word deadline did sort of fit to it. So they went for it. It's hard enough getting artwork when there's one band, let alone two so it was good to find a compromise which didn't suffer because it was a compromise.

B2F: It seems both Subhumans and Citizen Fish have been touring in the USA a lot in recent years. How did all that go?

Dick: It always goes really really good although last year with the credit crunch coming on - and this is before the banks went bust - petrol was going up umpteen dollars a gallon and people weren't going out much. On the Fish tour we went down the West Coast and up to the point where we did 5 gigs with Leftover Crack it seemed we stood to lose quite a bit of money and luckily they pulled in a lot more people no matter what state the economy is in and so that helps... Subhumans go over there and we don't really have problems pulling people in but that's the nature of what people like I suppose, so yeah - it usually goes down very well - we usually keep it to a maximum of \$10 to get in (£6-£7), make sure they're all ages as over there if

it's not all ages it's over 21 which excludes a good 70% of the crowd.

B2F: You've been playing some bigger venues recently such as Rebellion and Beautiful Days Festival. In light of the Feeding event and bringing anarcho-punk into a big venue and all the flak that goes with it do you think it doesn't work or do you have no problem with it?

Dick: I think it's a logical thing to do if you're going to get several bands all playing together, especially if it's 10 bands, like the Stig benefit (*Icons of Filth* singer who passed away a few years back - Ed) for instance, logically you need a big venue to fit the people in who turn up, from all over Europe sometimes, so aside from some massive squat venue that, I dunno, doesn't really exist you have to deal with the people who are out there making lots of money from putting gigs on...

B2F: You couldn't really risk a squat gig anyway, I mean it could be so easily closed down and what with people travelling from all over and that... but do you think anything is lost, in terms of message for example, by playing these types of venue?

Dick: Yeah, of course I do - I mean the bigger the venue the more bouncers there are, there are more searches on the door, the less likely to go out for a cigarette, £4.00 for a can of Blackthorn, you know, it's not

where we want to be at all. I mean that is just the logic of having a lot of people turn up.

B2F: I mean obviously in smaller places with small venues there's a lot of gigs going on locally and the like but a lot of the bigger, well-known bands play these venues regularly and are getting more and more sucked into the machine, it seems?

Dick: It must seem like that if the only gigs you notice bands doing are the ones in big venues that get advertised en masse, cos when you asked the question about what big gigs, I'm thinking what big gigs (apart from Rebellion and the very occasional festival) all our gigs are at the same venues they always have been at for the last 15-20 years - the 1in12 Club, TJ's in Newport etc (actually last time we were in Newport we played Le Pub which is 1/3rd the size of TJ's - they do that for mid-week gigs and there's a fantastic atmosphere and it's just as good as playing somewhere bigger to more people).

B2F: Where do you think the punk scene is going these days, I mean there's a lot of coming and going over the years but things had kind of died towards the end of the 90's but then it all came back again with Ian Glasper's books, the *Day the Country Died* film and other documentaries, *Overground Records* anarcho series. There seems to be a bit of a revival with a lot of old bands reforming and back on the

circuit, some of them doing new stuff too so do you feel the UK scene is healthy again?

Dick: Every time I get asked questions about 'the scene'...

B2F: It's a bit vague, I know...

Dick: ... it's terribly vague - I got asked this question 2 days ago in Bradford (laughs) but it was about how the scene doesn't exist anymore... it's just another word made up by the music press years ago just to split things - are you in this scene or that scene? It's all very elitist and puts labels on people BUT... I mean should I know the answer to this? We're a band and we play with other bands and that's the scene that I see - what sort of music, what sort of attitude is in the lyrics - I have to judge from that what the scene is like and I think it's pretty healthy cos young bands are coming along and a lot more of them are saying something political rather than personal...

B2F: That's what I was trying to get at, the political...

Dick: A lot of these bands are taking this stuff on board and they're very sharp and they're way more in touch than I am it seems, well yeah - I can't really justify saying that cos I'm not really saying that cos I'm older - that's crap - I'm not anymore in touch if I was younger but that would be less crap to say that... possibly... as I don't like staring at websites and finding out all the info that is out there much longer than a couple of hours as my brain closes down...

B2F: A lot of stuff has drifted online, do you think it's detrimental at the end of the day, I mean I do, networks like MySpace are useful for bands and that but it does take all the person to person real conversation stuff out of it?

Dick: As your 'talking' you start missing phone calls, everybody's sending typed up words, badly spelled, grammar's all gone down the pan - nobody gives a shit about anything like that anymore. MySpace messages are like "Hey Dick how's it going?" ...AARGH...it's just like "NOTHING'S going here at all - I'm staring at a fucking 5 word message from someone I've never met, and to them it means something if I reply but what will it mean unless I've said something relevant as if I've said something relevant to someone I'd met on a street corner who said "how's it going?" as if we're standing talking to each other? In this case something would develop like "not much, how are you..." and it's verbal and you can hear people and get things from their tone of voice and the expression on their faces you can never get behind a computer. So in the nature of communication there's more of it but it's much more shallow and much harder to get deep stuff going... hence go to as many gigs as you can, keep socializing with people and make more phone calls!

B2F: So what are Citizen Fish working on at the moment - any new material in the pipeline?

Dick: We're gradually getting new tunes together, we got about 5-6, so maybe another 5-6 and that's an album's worth. We might put it out on Alternative Tentacles...

B2F: Interesting, why's that then, why not on Bluurg? Financial reasons...?

Dick: ...not really - all the Citizen Fish that's been put out on Bluurg has all gone through Southern Records... whereas Southern said they were going to repress all the Subhumans vinyl cos they had gone out of stock and they would redo all the CDs as digipacs instead of using all this plastic, which I thought was fantastic, I said go for it - they sunk a shitload of money into it and it's all out now... and in passing it was mentioned in the background - what about re-releasing all the Citizen Fish CDs cos all the CDs that came out are now only on Bluurg as I'm making CDR copies 5 at a time (and it's not exactly the same thing but it's pretty close), then they said, yeah we'll do that as well, but they kind of dropped the ball on that, as they put it, as I asked them a year later what happened to that idea of all the Citizen Fish CDs and they're not going to do it - they can't afford to do it and it's quite sensible not to afford 1000 copies of each CD... it would cost a bomb... and the other online thing is there's people downloading the stuff for free so people aren't buying the 3 dimensional products anyway...

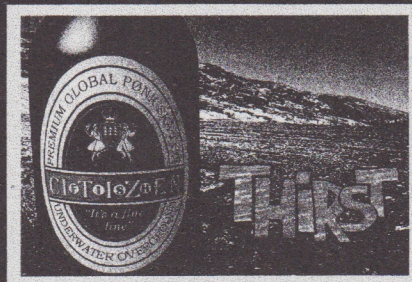


CITIZEN FISH



MILLENNIA MADNESS
(selected notes from the late 20th century)

CITIZEN FISH



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B2F: So how do you feel about the file-sharing/downloading thing?

Dick: I don't do it myself...

B2F: It's a double-edged sword, isn't it really?

Dick: Yeah I mean, ideally fuck the money - music should be free and the message should be there for anyone to hear it and... on a practical level the lyrics aren't getting studied and re-read or anything like that because they're not in front of people - they just download the music and (sometimes) if you can hear the words exactly you're not going to make much of an effort to find out what they are - if you're that keen you're going to buy the actual CD with the lyric sheet.... and Alternative Tentacles are well keen on doing it - they've got a good distribution set-up, they've got a good name in the punk scene and they've got an idea of re-releasing stuff on vinyl and including a link to a download for people who really want it on their iPod cos they can't get the vinyl onto their computer too easily (*doubt that now - Ed*) but they still get the package, all the lyrics etc.

B2F: Will Alternative Tentacles put out the back catalogue as well?

Dick: I haven't asked them... never thought about it, they probably wouldn't - they're getting cash-strapped like most labels - they're not going to waste money if you see what I mean. The amount Southern was selling straight after the original copies ran out (20 a

month or something)... which is something but... so repressing at a decent price you got to do 500-1000 at least so the outlay was super-huge and it would all be coming back over a decade so I can see their point of view, so I'm doing the CDRs - it's not in the shops but then the shops aren't there anymore (as if HMV would take them on anyway) and a lot of the DiY shops have gone too.

B2F: Ok, been meaning to ask you this many times - **Culture Shock** - maybe you get asked this a lot - why don't you play **Culture Shock** songs. I mean songs like "**Civilisation Street**", "**Punks On Postcards**", "**ISD**" etc, it's some of your best work?

Dick: Yes there is some classic stuff... Well Nige, (the guitarist) died so **Culture Shock** won't be reforming. We've never thought of playing it cos it was only me and Jasper from **Citizen Fish** that was in **Culture Shock** and then you got to find somebody to play who can sound like Nige's way of playing - I've never heard any guitarist like it... and Bill was a pretty strong drummer as well... we've never thought of covering these songs but then along those lines of thinking, we would already have started doing **Subhumans** songs before **Subhumans** actually reformed. The temptation to do our/my old material in this band was ever there... we'd have been playing "**Subvert City**" from week 2 or something. That's the way it is really, I just don't think you could do it justice.

B2F: What's your take on the anti-globalization actions such as the recent G 20 events in London? I mean people are getting slapped in the face more than ever and seem willing to eat shit while the politicians clean their moats with our taxes and unemployment soars.

Dick: We haven't had a good protest in the UK since J18... trying to relate it to the Poll Tax Riots when EVERYBODY was involved - it wasn't just the conspiracy theorists and the anarchists and grumpy types - it was absolutely everyone was pissed off with that. I think everybody's getting pissed off now with the banks, the fat cats, the money being thrown around, the complete lack of consideration or control from the politicians (who're just fucking useless anyway) - the lack of choice even when there is an election, people being thrown out of jobs again... it's like living when Thatcher was in power. Then there's the climate change camp, all the environmental stuff, oil prices, pollution, too many cars and not enough bikes... yeah hopefully it's all rising up into one sort of devolutionary point where people just say - really I'm not getting any answers back from the people I'm supposed to trusting to supply the answers. You have to start working with people on a local scale - example - take over that redundant, closed-down pub or whatever and turn it into a community centre; buy the place by raising funds through local people, make it into something

that can be sustainable - get some land to grow food (and stop the supermarkets having control of supply and demand). WE have to be aware of what we're doing to the environment in the way we produce stuff - and then there's health - 30% of children obese... but the general apathy that's out there is now being countered by a much more under-reported...eh... opposite of apathy?...ok...ENERGY to make things better. It's gotta be done now because in 20 years... we can't even imagine what it's going to be like in 20 years... probably more fucked than ever...

B2F: Yes it certainly gives you something to think about but as a band bringing out product in the wake of climate chaos, how do you apply these ideas to minimize your impact on the environment? I mean there's digipacs which don't use plastic but what about touring and that?

Dick: Yes I do like digipacs - less plastic (and o less oil), biodegradable... in terms of travel you could get hardcore and say never fly anywhere but... it's worth doing from several angles when we go to somewhere like the US. I mean I don't think we should fly off to do a single gig in Italy or Poland which we have done this year already but we're constrained by other things which are more personal - Trotsky has kids to look after and has to be there, Bruce has 2 jobs and 2 kids, Jasper's just adopted a child ...

B2F: ...yes he was telling me about that earlier...

Dick:... and things like this so we have less time out of the responsibilities not to do the band and we have to squeeze things into a weekend - like doing 3 gigs in one country (if they pay the flights then we do it). That's the way we do it, we can't do a 4 week tour of Europe cos we ain't got the time... but going to the US has a sub-level reason of doing it in people's faces - this is happening now and you gotta do it in peoples' faces - you can't just put out another record - the US is the real source of a lot of the shit on this planet, won't say all of it but a hell of a lot of it, and to be there shouting against it from another side of the world perspective has got to have some influence on people, and also support the people who think the way we do. It takes away any impression that they might be on their own fighting against this beast of a government they've got. They're not on their own - people across the planet are supporting anyone in the US whose got any sense and hop and drive to change their own society cos that society they're living in is so shit it's wrecking the whole planet!

B2F: Do you think people in the US are far more politicized than they used to be? I really noticed this the last time I was in the US.

Dick: Yeah they are definitely - it don't get reported - they're desperate, they're annoyed, they're pissed off but they feel they're powerless for the most part because the power structure over there is gargantuan - the gap between rich and poor and from highest to lowest is miles...

B2F: Ok moving on to lighter topics... I notice you did the artwork for the LOC split - how and when did you get into painting?

Dick: I've been painting for about 5 years. I liked the idea of it so I got these cheap paints in Poland and a set of brushes and it all cost about 200 zloty (£4ish). I started on thick card then stopped but the bud was in there and a couple of years later I got some acrylic paints and painted bits of cardboard and then canvas later but I didn't want to waste money on a lot of stuff if I wasn't going to be any good at it - but it's a whole new experience and very enjoyable to do. I like what the colours do when they're mixed together - you can't imagine it. I always said I couldn't paint but I'd never tried it, so...

B2F: Indeed it seems as if you have many talents. Thanks for taking some time out, hope the tour goes well... anything else you'd like to add?

Dick: Just reflecting on the fact we're in Belfast and the recent shootings - the massive protest against that was very heartening. I mean I only see it through the fucking media but if that's any indication of what it's really like, then brilliant. 20 years ago we were worried about "Human Error" cos it has that line about Belfast in it - will people kick off just cos we're English and we've got no right to say that, but then Belfast is meant to be part of the UK and there's people that don't want it to be...aargh.. it's almost like we



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were afraid t but we came over
anyway and that was brilliant but
it's good finally the army is off
the streets, well mostly, and
things are moving forwards.

www.citizenfish.com

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RIPPING THRASH #25

SPLIT ISSUE WITH HELL AND DAMNATION ZINE SPRING 2009
New Zine out at last - 48 pages featuring Chris from Agitate zine,
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REVIEWS :

Please send in your material for review. If you contribute regularly we'll send you a copy of the zine. For one-off reviews we will send an electronic copy so please include an email. Sorry about that but with mounting costs etc... While we will review anything we tend to prefer anarchist and political material whether that be music, video or the written word. We also prefer the finished deal rather than promo copies because it is the package the punter will buy in the end. Thanks to Trev HAGL for helping out with reviews this time. If you sent something in and it hasn't been reviewed please remind us.

THE MOB: "Let the Tribe Increase" CD (Overground): One of the all time classic anarcho-punk records is finally back in print! I have the CD discography put out by Sean Forbes' Rugger Bugger label in 1995 but the sound quality on this version is superior and it also includes "The Mirror Breaks" 7in and a previously unavailable version of "Stay" as bonus tracks. There's not much to say that hasn't already been said about this album - introverted, dark and moody yet there's something positive in the timely lyrics too. It comes with a top 16 page booklet too! Highly recommended by back2front, as is the companion volume "May Inspire Revolutionary Acts", which is also available from www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

NATIONAL DISASTERS: And It Begins CD (Active Rebellion et al): National Disasters hail from Mexico and this album is a collaborative effort between several DiY labels from Mexico and Europe. The band plays an eclectic blend of melodic crust with occasional acoustic guitar and cello passages with a D-beat engine. Some of it's really good and I especially like the guitar sound. The CD comes in a digipac with artwork by Sean Fitzpatrick (our cover artist this issue) and a very basic insert with lyrics in Spanish and English. See advert elsewhere for Active Rebellion details.

THE SKIDS: "The Absolute Game" CD (Captain Oi): The Skids were a new wave/post punk band from Scotland active in the late 70's and early 80's. This new issue features the album of the same name for the first time on CD, the "Strength Thru Joy" album as bonus material, and a chunky booklet too, so if you're a fan this is a nice package. The Skids included Stuart Adamson who went onto form **Big Country** before taking his own life in 2001. It's not my cup of tea at all but if you like that sort of thing check out <http://www.captainoi.com>

NEGATIVE REACTION #12: I have to be careful here as Trev is one of the guest reviewers this issue. But seriously this is by far the best NR to date, but also possibly the last as the recession hits home in co Durham. It includes interviews with **Anthrax**, **Kunt & The Gang**, **D'Corner Bois**, **Gimp Fist**, **Dipsomaniacs** and all the usual columns and reviews. Give him a shout for a copy while stocks last as well as his massive lists of CDs, LPs, DVDs, books and more at trevhagl@hotmail.com

PROPAGANDHI: "Supporting Caste" CD (Smallman): Propagandhi are at the stage now where they could become massive and their popularity is well-deserved. Hopefully this won't affect the positive DiY anarchist attitude they've maintained from the word go. I didn't get them at the start but their last 3 albums have been excellent and the attention to detail is truly inspiring. This is a powerful album, beneath the jokey exterior (which is all great fun by the way) there is some very serious opinion and it's not the usual fodder, being well-considered and passionately delivered, although "Human(e) Meat" is a bit daft. The music is quite complex at times too as on "Night Letters", occasionally tipping back into hardcore roots on "This Is Your Life" but generally progressive in nature and difficult to pigeonhole. OK and there's a bit of chunga-chunga in there too. A word needs to be added about the superb ecologically-sourced digipac packaging which features artwork by Kent Monkman and 24 page booklet of lyrics and information. Highly recommended, in fact I'm going to put it on again now - details from www.propagandhi.com

SEIZURE CRYPT: "Under the Gun CD": Crap Metal. No really. And let that be a lesson to the rest of you. Try Kerrang or Metal Cucumber next time!

UNIT/LIVING LEGENDS: "Class War" Split CD (DNA): Infamous Class War house-band The Living Legends were a notorious motley crew fronted by Ian Bone back in the 1980s, most of whose recordings were thought lost until now. The material here sounds dated and is a bit Sid James with 10 pints of lager in places (you'd expect no less) but there's a few real gems such as "Island Wars" and "Sexist Twat". Now back in the day Bone also teamed up with Conflict to record the Class War single (also featured here) BUT initially he was meant to record it with the Apostles (noted for class war anthems like "Mob Violence") but it didn't come to pass. Twenty years later Bone joins Andy Martin (ex Apostles) and UNIT to record a varied selection of class conscious critiques such as "Fuck Off Gordon Brown" and a reworking of the Apostles "Worker's Autonomy" but there's far better material such as "Take Your Filthy Laws Off Our Bodies" and Bone's narration of the Lucy Parson's epic "To Tramps". Let us devastate the avenues where the wealthy live indeed!! As you can expect from UNIT the music is very diverse and encompasses lots of different territories and it's far more accessible than their recent material though they should lay off the magic mushrooms and get rid of that bloody vibraphone! www.unit.united.co.uk

INITONIT #25: The last issue of this long-running zine announces that the zine is dead though Paul will continue his ranting and raving online and in other publications (Gadgie I believe?). As usual this time you get another series of cut and paste opinions some of which are spot on but there's very few graphics to break the print up. There's interviews with **Poundaflesh**, **the Departed** and **Nuclear Death Terror** alongside reviews and 50p with an SAE will get you a copy. paul@paulinitonit.plus.com

DEF-A-KATORS: "Texas Redneck with a Big Cock" (Pumf): Worth buying for the cover alone this is a sort of discography of this Blackpool band who formed 1986 and have done recordings on and off put out by one of the longest running proper DiY labels in the UK. This is a promo so can't say what sort of package you'd get. According to the blurb the band were "a parody of the mindless idiocy that most punk bands of the time were displaying", so make of that what you will. There are some good tunes in a sort of post punk/sound montage style on here but I'm not a fan of drum machines. It's only £5 however and Stan has a lot of other stuff which may be of interest. www.pumf.net

BUG CENTRAL: "Welcome To Dead Town" CD (Stop Thief): They've been around since 1996 but have been on hiatus for 7 years apparently and this is actually the first time I've heard them. Although there's some good material on here, and it comes across all angry and frustrated, it does seem clichéd in places and has a patched together feel. Production is sketchy too and the package has a basic 4 page insert but if you give a few listens there's powerful stuff on here too. "This is the Day" is a gem, "Dead Town" is pure anarcho-grit. A mixed bag but one with a lot of potential and I'll be keeping my ear to the ground for more. www.myspace.com/bugcentraluk

THE LEVELLERS - "Letters from the Underground" CD (On the Fiddle): Their best album for many years and a real return to form for a band now celebrating 20 years on the road. Describing themselves as anarchists and taking their cue from **Crass** and **The Clash** they were once the spokesmen for the traveller/crusty brigade and the latter free-festival scene but despite later finding mainstream success they seem to have regained control, releasing their own material on their own label once again. They also run a recording studio, The Metway, in Brighton (once the home of anarchist news-sheet *Schnews*) as well their annual festival, Beautiful Days. It's all a bit pricey though and you have to ask. The album is a 2 disc digipac and 12 page booklet and features instant classics "Cholera Well" and "A Life Less Ordinary" but it's a diverse recording with even the radio-friendly-unit-shifter "Just One Kiss" being annoyingly memorable.

NICK TOCZEK: "Totally Intoczekated" CD - This disc features assorted recordings of the anarchist poet and organiser working with various bands including **Dan**, **Toxic Reasons** and **Wreckless Eric** among others. This is great stuff, two dozen cheap calling cards from a doubly-decayed

double decade of living it, as Nick writes in the intro, much of it DiY one-take, winging-it style punk wreck. Comes with a packed 16 page booklet and is available from the man himself via www.myspace.com/nick_toczek where you can also check out the huge amount of stuff this one man font of creativity has produced over the decades including radio shows, children's books and even operas! A much recommended slice of anarcho history!

AMEBIX: "Risen" DVD (Belfast Records): This is a history of the band filmed by Roy Wallace of **Toxic Waste** featuring all former members, friends and contemporaries as well as those inspired by this seminal band including **Neurosis** and **Jello Biafra** of **Alternative Tentacles** (who has also released the band's back catalogue). Without doubt Amebix were a major influence in their time and this documentary is full of interesting comments and history but overall the film seems to elevate them to mythical status which is all very rock and roll, while the DiY culture they grew from seems lost along the way. They've toured recently among rumours of high booking fees but there's talk of new material so it remains to be seen what they do with it. www.belfastrecords.co.uk

PENNY RIMBAUD: "Last of the Hippies" (Active): A new version of the short book that originally came with *Christ the Album* box set but now as a small perfect bound book, fully revised and with a new introduction by the author. For those unfamiliar it is the story of Wally Hope who was one of the founders of the modern Stonehenge Free Festivals and whom the author feels was literally murdered by the state. Powerful and moving, if at times naive, this is an important historical account of the anger that fuelled the early days of Crass. And at £1.50 you can hardly complain.

STAND OUT RIOT: "Carnival Militia" CD (TNS): Pop/ska/punk band number 1,020,698 here but for once I will spare such a band a verbal hiding. Stand Out Riot sound not too dissimilar from all the rest except their singer isn't quite as annoying, the lyrics are quite clever and there's shitloads of thought gone into the music, particularly the chord changes which sees the music go off on numerous tangents without getting arty and boring. **Capdown** are a good reference point. You can't really go wrong with songs like "The British Nazi Parade" and "Oxbridge Mafia".

WOMEN STENCILS (Active): A zine-size collection of... women stencils funnily enough. If you're fed up seeing the usual shapes of bloke's heads like Che Guevara or Bob Marley then this should help balance things. All you need is this book and some spray paint. From www.actedistribution.org

GADGIE #24: After a brief hiatus Marv is back with assorted tales, rants, raves and nonsense. Includes more history of the Boston punk scene and plenty of reviews. Funny, positive and even uplifting it's great to see zines like this still going. Would like to see more graphics (the ones here are hard to see and few and far between) and perhaps a less linear layout to make it a bit more user friendly but that's only a minor complaint. Gadgie is always worth a read! Details from Mr Gadgie, PO Box 93, Boston, Lincs, PE21 7YB, UK or at mrgadgie@hotmail.com

THE LOBOTOMIES: "Big Bang Over" CD (DiY EHC): There's a few rough diamonds in here and the odd lump of coal, though if you leave a lump of coal long enough it becomes a diamond too apparently. "Big Bang Hangover" is the Lobotomies' first album proper, following up the split they did and is essentially old style hardcore but played fast and unrelentingly with occasional forays into metal (coal) without being too wanky - there's lots of shouty choruses too but also good use of vocal harmony ("Year Zero") and plenty of attention to melody. For the most part you can make out the words, with all members sharing vocal duties. "Shitcore" is a minor classic! Can't comment on packaging as this was a slipcase promo. All said a very competent debut and a reminder that punk in Belfast is very much alive. thelobotomies@gmail.com

BAD SAMARITANS: "Toilet Tapes" demo CDR: Beddis from **Cowboy Killers'** new band and a touch on the

noisy/thrashy side for me but some good original social commentary in there. Sort of like DK's "Bedtime For Democracy" but going off on tangents. www.myspace.com/badsamaritans1

ATOMGEVITTER: "Hiroshemo" 7in (various labels) Fine sentiments and nice cover (a suicide bomber outside an emo gig). Good lyrics too ("folks bought you gear but they couldn't buy you talent"). However musically it's almost as intolerable as the fairies they're campaigning against. Shout shout scream scream thrash thrash for 5 songs. No expense spared on the packaging though, even a glossy lyric booklet inside. <http://www.myspace.com/atomgevitter>

BURNING HELLS: "Blessed By The Devil, Cursed By God" 7in: "Stripped to the bone, bad ass no-fi psycho trash" it claims, and that's pretty much what you get. The first track on the B side is a plodding sleazy number like one of **The Cramps'** less interesting pieces but the other two are raging garage punk meets psychobilly. The production adds even more clout, making it hard to believe these are a 2-piece. Not sure about the authenticity of the "Raucous Records" connection though, if I was a cynical man I would suspect this of being on Dislocate recs. www.myspace.com/theburninghells

COCK SPARRER: "Guilty As Charged 2009" (Captain Oi!): Sparrer's mid 90's comeback album on German label Bitzcore which has been nigh on impossible to find in recent years gets reissued with the usual quality Capn Oi packaging, full lyrics and bonus tracks lifted from the "Runaway Johnny" MLP. Bursting with classics like "Because We're Young" (they made a video for this, see the band's double DVD - £9ppd UK from trevhagl@hotmail.com via PayPal or email for other details), "Bird Trouble" (which we sang behind many a mate's back, some of whom are actually back in the fold now!), "Last Train to Dagenham", "I Fit Central Heating" and "Tough Guys". Cracking tune after cracking tune, only really pausing for breath with the 4+ minute long "Crack In The Mirror". Best of the bonus tracks are "Why Can't You See", which despite the low budget recording, is a cracking ultra catchy number slagging off terrorists. Not much to fault here although the handwritten graphics look a bit NWOBHM, and I think the band matured over the years and the new ("Here We Stand") album is less Cockney geezery and more serious.

COCK SPARRER: "2 Monkeys 2009" (Captain Oi!): A hard one to live up to this, coming so soon after "Guilty as Charged" and parts of it do seem chucked together, like the old England song "Back Home", the "what's your point caller?" number "Lies", the cheesy R & B of "Bats Out" and a few numbers where the band seem to be aiming at being a **Cockney Big Country**. But whilst this is more mainstream in sound, the tunes are still cracking, and "A.U." (which I think I remember as being tongue in cheek) and "I Live in Marbella" are still better than anything most bands from the 90's could come up with. Bonus tracks are a bit pointless (4 live numbers) but I guess there's not a lot else left to do...

HARDA TIDERZ: "Varsak" 7in: I hope I have the name right - their logo is done in that annoying US80's skater band style. Musically this is really powerful, with all musicians on full alert to produce a mighty D-BEAT (with a metal twist) racket. Not something I could listen to but these Swedes do a good job at it. www.notenoughhardcorepunk.se

THE RETURNERS: "We Die Alone" 7in (Nothing But A Nightmare) Some good powerful punk here...and then the vocals come in. What on fucking earth is THIS? The geezer sounds like Glenn Danzig trying to sing for **Spandau Ballet**, really really cringe-worthy. They name-drop **Adolescents**, **Ramones** and **Social Distortion** on the insert which is a bit baffling considering the end result here. www.nothingbutanightmare.com

RUNNIN' RIOT: "Boots & Ballads" CD (Dirty Old Man) With most UK Oi bands these days being tuneless metal-core with Sun-reader lyrics it's good to finally get back to quality. This is everything the last album threatened to be (shit production ruined it you may remember). Anthem after anthem, dirty UK70's glam guitars and huge choruses. It oozes

class from every orifice, from the mid paced opener right through to "16 On The Dole" (which my mate sez is an obscure folk song originally recorded for **Consett's 'Rock & Dole'** LP just after Thatcher had destroyed the steel works (and everything else). And if that's not enough, leave it playing and you get another classic "Oi Angel" complete with good female vocals on the chorus. Dunno why it's hidden (I don't think it's a cover?) although knowing Colin it will be deliberately to piss people off! One of the best albums ever and I am not just saying that cos I got some to flog (email trevhag1@hotmail.com for details or use that address to PayPal £7 UK or £8 Europe)

SOS: "Adult Situations" CD: Makes you wonder how releases like this end up at an anarcho punk fanzine, but here we go. SOS seem to have missed the Nu-metal/**Linkin Park/Papa Roach** bandwagon by a good few years. Throw in a bit of **Metallica** and a shitty cheap card promo sleeve and we're there. They do at least include a box of promotional matches so you can burn the fucker I suppose....
www.sosnyc.com

VOLENTEERS/VISUAL OFFENCE - Split 7in (Townclock): When I did reviews for **SPIRAL SCRATCH** they would repeatedly send me any old shite (I wouldn't even waste my own time listening to em, I had a beat box at work) that they knew I'd hate it, but the editors would get a good sick laugh out of the demolition I would do on the bands/artists. Well there's no dance or indie shite here but it's just about as bad. Two bands playing the same thrashed out, utterly tuneless style with abysmal screamed vocals. I would probably rather take my chances with the coppers on the cover (sporting truncheons and hard-ons) than have to listen to THIS again...
www.myspace.com/townclockrecords

V/A - "Still Got Something to Prove" 7" (Townclock): The only tributes I think that could really work are those demolishing cheesy songs I reckon. Because if a band were worth paying tribute to the songs will have been done well enough in the first place surely, and anything less would just be pointless. **Bickle's Cab** and **Burn Subvert Destroy** make the mistake of covering the **Spermbird's** later (and thus shite) songs whilst the highlights are **Sunpower** doing "My God Rides a Skateboard" and **Swelbellys'** "Something to Prove". **Spermbird's** had more than 6 really good songs so I guess this EP fails in its task. www.myspace.com/townclockrecords

ALTERNATE ACTION- "Thin Line" CD (Longshot): Joint release with **Bords De Seine** from France, this digipac gathers together the band's 7", split 7" and "Tough Times" 10" EP and 3 unreleased tracks. AA include in their ranks ex members of **Glory Stompers**, **Subway Thugs & Lancasters** and play stripped down Oi/streetpunk. No distortion pedals needed to hide behind - the band have more in common with pre-Oi bands such as **Menace & Slaughter** and the **Dogs** - just good down to earth songs and no fillers. Certainly not the 3 unreleased songs which are great.
www.myspace.com/longshotmusic

BOTOX RATS / DEAD RINGERS - Split 7" (Longshot): Botox Rats are one of many bands that include Marco from **No Front Teeth** and it's a bizarre combination of glam punk tunes (with a high in the mix piano in places). Some good ideas but **Stitches'** vocals always got on my tits. **Dead Ringers** sound like a **Hostage Records** band, but with a singer who sounds like **Johnny Thunders** on helium. Yes, **Stitches** fans will indeed like this record. www.myspace.com/longshotmusic

HOSTAGE LIFE/KNUCKLEHEAD split 7" (Longshot): **Hostage Life** from Canada look like a trendy student version of a streetpunk band, and that's what they sound like too. Decent tunes but lacking the bollocks of the original punk bands. The lyrics too are very personal and poetic, which sends me to sleep. **Knucklehead** have been around for a while and started life with a slight Oi influence then went down the **Rancid** meets **Green Day** path. "Hearts on Fire" is a good catchy number with just enough guts in the mix to pull it off, a song about bloodshed in Burma. Their second number "Sense & Politics" has a bit of a country twang to it. Not quite sure what their point is with lyrics like "now people cheer the Dixie Chicks, there ain't no sense in politics" - are they slagging em for having the guts to stand up against warmongers?
www.myspace.com/longshotmusic

INTENSIVES/PANIC ATTACK - Split 7" (Longshot):

Nice splatter green vinyl here but I can't think of much else good to say about it. Both bands are pretty tuneless. Fast and thrashy with some weird riffs that are like a cross between 80's punk/metal crossover and surf (if that makes any sense). Sort of like a low budget **Casualties** or something.
www.myspace.com/longshotmusic

NERVOUS TICS- "Stupid Little Heart" 7" (Longshot):

On first listen I thought "yet another **Briefs** copy" but it's a grower and there's a cracking bass and organ solo towards the end. The 2 tracks on the B side are pretty good too, despite "California Girl" being a bit too close to a punk **Beach Boys** for comfort. Maybe it's a cover? Ask someone who hasn't banished the 60's from their mind. On Orange vinyl.

ON THE BRINK : "Take Cover" CD (Longshot):

Longshot once put out a release by a band called **Flash Bastard** who combined anthemic glam/punk tunes with all out **RAWWK** vocals. These remind me of them a bit but also thrown into the mix there's a bit (a lot!) of **Dropkick Murphys** (without the folk) and late 80's **USHC** youth crew chants. Some good lyrics attacking leaders and the bible belt and generally despairing at humanity. Plenty of good ideas but reviewers who like a nice easy niche to fit a band into are gonna struggle. www.myspace.com/longshotmusic

BEAT MOTEL #9: The "procreation" issue so you get all kinds of ramblings about dodgy ex's, a sperm test, copping off 70's style and even a bit politics courtesy of moi. Lots of great graphics (love my & **Mike Hunt's** headers) / amusing bits, reviews etc. Musically very diverse, but I like the attitude. £2ppd from PO Box 773, Ipswich, IP1 9FT

RIOT ON YOUR OWN #? - A good Argy Bargy interview plus the usual load of reviews that are, as always, funny and full of attitude. Plus his son's kick boxing exploits, gigs, etc Free w large letter SAE - Bill, 5 Glen Rd, Belfast, BT5, N.Ireland

TNS #4 - free with large letter SAE - Flat B11, 8 Great Northern Tower, Manchester, M3 4EH. Prolific indie label which knocks out a load of CDs by new bands. The interviews (**Fractions**, **Shadowcops**, **Emos** (thankfully that's sarcastic), **Do The Dog Recs** are mainly based on the local scene, gigging etc, whereas they coulda been a lot more interesting if they were asked more political questions. Musically it's like **Blackpool Rox**, his enthusiasm running amok to such an extent even piss poor indie (albeit DIY) bands get good write ups, but it's good to see someone dedicated.

EXCUSES: "State Emergency" EP (Me Distro): Singer **Jasper** cut his chops with mid-80s anarcho **Les Turds** way up north. Relocating to Ireland and promoting gigs again under the **Poo** promotions banner (see **B2F #4**) this is his latest band and what a stormer. Cutting, angry vocals over sharp punk rock played with attitude. Highly recommended. Is available from **Distro-y** records (see advert on page 51) and as a free download.

MORAL DILEMMA: "Agree To Disagree" CD (Pumpkin Records): Very, very catchy punk rock from London with trade off male and female vocals contrasting aggression with melody over 22 minutes that's somewhere between **The Restarts** and **The Gits**. There are several gems on here ("Embrace the Rage" is a killer opener) that will stick in your head straight away and the subject matter covers more than the usual anarcho-punk standard fare. I like the lyrics to "Question All Authority" but I like the over-all attitude - of questioning everything, especially punk rock I might add. And the cover artwork by **Songe Riddle** I want up on my wall.
www.pumpkinrecords.co.uk

AOA: "Axis of Ascendency" CD/DVD (All Out Audio):

Brings together most of **AOA's** recordings for the first time over 2 discs with a bonus DVD and a very juicy 24 page booklet. An excellent and well thought-out package! Pity more bands and labels don't spend this much effort! Bands like **AOA** were the nuts and bolts of the 80's punk scene in Scotland and if you're interested in early anarcho bands or the Scottish scene itself then this is an essential purchase put together with a lot of love and thought provoking attitude. Get your copy before they're all gone! www.myspace.com/alloutaudio

THE CUT UPS: "The High & Mighty" CD (Household Name): "Fracture" syndrome strikes again. For the uninitiated, Fracture was a late 90's/early 00's student punk zine that hyped a lot of very average bands to the skies despite have singers that could curdle milk and lyricists that thought themselves to be classic English poets. I think titles like "*Last Night I Saw Fugazi*" will tell you whether or not you are going to like this. Musically it's decent solid, tuneful punk but the singing is straight out of No Idea records, and the lyrics and cover just scream 'university degree'. End result - bland.
www.householdnamerecords.co.uk

THE EMOS: "Quicker Than Khan" CD (TNS): Fuck knows who Khan is but I am pleased to announce that the band name is firmly tongue in cheek. The Emos play fast raw punk with strained vocals (VERY strained- if the geezer grew up in Japan he would be in the **Discocks**) and off kilter backing vocals. This was pretty hard to listen to, but underneath the noise there are some good tunes trying to get out. Lyrically wacky and non too serious.
www.tnsrecords.co.uk

SHADOWCOPS: A Big Pot of Hot" CD (TNS): Well played fast punk/metal/grunge topped off with OTT rock vocals half way between Cal from **Discharge** (doing his Grave New World theatrics) and the geezer from **AC/DC**. It's actually not as bad as that would lead you to believe. Shadowcops are tight as fuck and have good riffs aplenty, although like many new bands the lyrics are too arty for their own good.
www.tnsrecords.co.uk

RUNNIN FEART #16: Behind the eye catching cover lurks interviews with **GBH**, **Goldblade**, **Spam**, **The Few**, **Silent Meow**, **Dirty Pick-Ups** plus the usual generous portion of usually enthusiastic but occasionally scathing reviews. Most of the interviews are well sussed and interesting, esp. Silent Meow. The reviews are very descriptive and open minded without going TOO far. Excellent print job/pics as usual. This one comes free with a Toppers Recs sample, though unless you're a bit of a chemist it's very hard going, ranging from experimental **Swell Maps** bedroom type stuff (various members/incarnations are included) to 60's psyche/trash. £2.50ppd? - Callum Masson, 12 Crusader Crescent, Stewarton, Ayrshire, Scotland KA3 3BL

REVENGE OF THE PSYCHOTRONIC MAN: "Make Pigs Smoke" CD (TNS): Looking at this you'd expect some **Throbbing Gristle** type nonsense, but these are in fact a straight up hardcore punk band from Manchester. Nothing really out of the ordinary but tight and powerful as fuck with some great basslines and excellent production. They filled the booklet with pics of friends rather than lyrics but I doubt I woulda been any the wiser anyway. www.tnsrecords.co.uk

SOUNDS OF SWAMI: "Halcyon Days" 7in (TNS): Fast powerful hardcore from Yorkshire that at times sounds like the more melodic straight edge bands of the late 80's. Pleasantly cynical song titles like "*Your Clue is in the Title*" and "*Bandwagon Hi-jack*". It's been done before many times but they do a fine job at it.

BURNT CROSS/AUK: "The Earth Dies Screaming" Split CD (Pumpkin et al): Very rarely I like a record on first listen but this is excellent - and normally any sign of drum machines has me running for cover but the two brothers in Burnt Cross pull of a really edgy and immediate raw sound which is solidly based in old school anarcho-punk but sounds fresh with spitting angry vocals over mid-paced but tuneful punk rock. AUK are an older band from Scotland playing in a similar vein and featuring Ian Influx who used to be in the mighty **Alternative**. The lyrics are strong and passionately delivered. A quality release, even if has all been said before, and recommended for the anarchy-obsessed punker in your life.
www.myspace.com/aukofficialbandsite

THE EX: "30" CD (Ex Records): Dutch experimental anarcho-jazzers have been going for 30 years and this is a sort of best-of to celebrate the anniversary which also sees the departure of lead singer GW Sok (see B2F #2 for Ex interview) though he will still be involved and the band will continue with a new singer. The Ex are nothing but innovative and this

selection from all their albums cruises through the early anarcho-punk and industrial styles through to the modern freeform jazz-influenced and atonal hybrid they've become today. I still think their 2004 album "*Turn*" is a classic but this is a good place for casual and curious buyer. The massive Ex back catalogue is available via Active or www.theex.nl

DEATH SLAM: "Jesus Cristo. Com & Rep Ltda" CD (Independencia et al): Brazilian crust somewhere between Fuaim Catha period **Oi Polloi**, **Sepultura** and early **Black Sabbath** and if you think that sounds good well it's pretty one-dimensional really. The 8 page booklet is in Portuguese so I can't say much more than that but if you like basic grindcore then try this or **Terror Revolucionario** which features the same singer and the same style. No contact details but try massiser@hotmail.com

STRENGTH THROUGH DESPAIR #2: Quality-printed zine from Switzerland in English features interviews with **Spanner**, **Deadly Pale** and **Maelstrom** which are a cut above the usual because the questions are not generic pop journalism but there's also articles a-plenty, in-depth and questioning on polyamory (having more than 1 sexual partner), natural hygiene as well as a critique of Zerzan's anarcho-primitivism. There's also the confessions of an ex-Nazi (who turns out to be the editor) as well as reviews. Cut and paste style is well-presented and overall this is a good read and at €2 plus postage it's well worth a look:
strength_through_despair@yahoo.com

THE DISRUPTERS: "Gas the Punks" CD (Overground): This is, as we've come to expect from Overground Records, a fine selection of the Disrupters early vinyl material from the classic "*Young Offender*" 7in, "*Shelters for the Rich*" 7in, "*Unrehearsed Wrongs*" LP, the "*Playing with Fire*" LP, several compilation tracks and seven previously unreleased tracks. Throw in the 12 page booklet and you have a definitive account of one of the more politically active acts from the classic era of anarcho-punk. Another must have.
www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

K-JELL: "Refreshing K-Jell Power" CD (October Party): This trio for Norway have taken a time-machine back to 1978 UK punk rock for this album (think pop punk/new wave) with all lyrics in English and packaged in a card cover but there's no booklet (lose 10 points). The jury's out here - I don't like the style especially well but it's well done it has to be said.
www.myspace.com/kjellband

PLOPPY PANTS #8: Best issue of this zine so far features interviews with **Kansalaistotelemattomuus**, **Active Minds**, **Antacid**, **Covet Chaos**, **Idiots Parade**, **Wardead**, **Reason To Believe** zine, **Jellybrain** zine, an **Ablach** tour diary and more as well as columns and lots of reviews. This 5th anniversary issue also features a free CDR of bands featured in the issue and then some and at 60 pages of cut n paste DiY punk rock it's definitely worth a look. dirty_little_punk@hotmail.com

THE DISRUPTERS: "3 Feature DVD" (Derek Video): I was going to email Bangkok Steve and ask him if he had a copy of the Disruptors film "*Anarchy Peace and Chips*" and then it drops through the letterbox. Spooky! The 3 feature DVD features the aforementioned classic from 1988, a top quality multi-camera shoot of their set at the *Feeding of the 5000* gig and a camcorder movie of a very intimate gig at the Eddy 7 last year capturing the best of the old and reformed Disruptors, not forgetting to mention the poetry interludes from *Prem Nick*. Essential kit - contact disruptors@btinternet.com immediately.

MILLIONS OF DEAD COPS & THE RESTARTS:
"Mobocracy" Split CD (No Label): An instant classic, it comes packaged in a handsome digipac (gain ten points) with artwork by Kieran and a fold out booklet of lyrics, art etc. MDC's 7 brand new tracks here sees original member Al Schvitz back on drums so the sound is classic well-driven, fast-paced MDC with intricate playing and top lyrics delivered by one of the best vocalists in punk. Brilliant! The Restarts new tracks again see the band on good form with their skankified thrash crossover. Overall this is a classic package of anarcho-punk delivered by two of the best bands in the scene both sides of the Atlantic. You can't do without this.
www.nolabelrecords.org

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